

**iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p Indigenous Hub Evaluation:
Phases 1 & 2**

ABORIGINAL FRIENDSHIP CENTRE OF CALGARY

Many Nations. One Family.™

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EVALUATORS | 2019-2020

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Executive Summary: Framing the report

Experiences with and through environments are significant in the formation, expression, and practicing of cultural lifeways. Mohkíns'tsís, The City of Calgary is within the traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani Nations), Tsuu T'ina Nation (Dene), Iyarhe Nakoda (Bears paw, Chiniki, and Wesley Nations) and is within the boundaries of Treaty 7. Today, Calgary is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3, Métis Local 87, and many Indigenous people from other territories in Canada. The large metropolis provides many positive opportunities for Indigenous people to commune, share experiences, tell stories, practice ceremonies, and build kinship relations. The city however, also perpetuates racism, discrimination, and colonial ideologies that render the environment as unsafe and unjust for Indigenous people to flourish and thrive. *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* – a place of conversation, also known as the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary's Indigenous Hub, is one such place in the City of Calgary that Indigenous people access for wellness, belonging, kinship, and safety. This evaluation report illustrates *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* as a place where people seek refuge, have a sense of home, safety and belonging, can build kinship relations, and participate in cultural practices. This report is divided into two major components and encompasses the phased evaluation process that the researchers undertook over a two period and covers a timeframe from July 2018 to July 2020. the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub

The *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* was established in July of 2018 in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report (TRC, 2015) to create a centralized location, in downtown Calgary, that provides wholistic services and programs to Indigenous people in Calgary. The Indigenous Hub operates through the generous contributions of United Way, the City of Calgary, and Calgary Police Services. The facility currently housing the Hub, is donated by the Calgary Police Services. Seven service entities create the structure of the Hub and are designed to provide for the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of Indigenous people. Although there are structured service areas, the Hub is a multidimensional organism that is constantly evolving based on the needs of the Indigenous community in Calgary and strives to adapt accordingly. During its the Hub has provided services to 4550 people.

Phase one of the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub evaluation was conducted by two independent researchers, Dr. Gabrielle Lindstrom (nee Weasel Head) (Kainaiwa) and Victoria Bouvier (Michif) through an Indigenous research paradigm that centered relationality (Deloria, 1999) in all of the research engagements. During phase two evaluation, Dr. Gabrielle Lindstrom was joined by Andrea Brooks. The researchers listened to the stories of staff, clients, partners, and a traditional knowledge keeper to come to a better understanding of the impact the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* was having in the City of Calgary. Phase two picked up on this storied journey. While listening to the stories, the researchers seen impact as relational wherein the quality of peoples relationships, in all areas of their lives, determined wellness; thus people's well-being is a direct result of the ability to have positive connections, build and maintain meaningful relationships, feel safe and belonging in the city, to practice their cultural lifeways, and to feel autonomous in their movement through spaces and services in the city.

Although the Hub has only been in operation for a short time, two years, the stories told illustrated the programs and services are contributing to the health and well-being of Indigenous people in Calgary. The clients spoke of the *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* as creating a space where they can feel safe and have a sense of belonging and through which they can access ceremony and cultural teachings. Having the ability to form positive connections and relationships was a large factor in the impact of wellness, as discussed by the clients. The location of the Hub was also a defining character of their experience. Located in downtown Calgary and on the C-Train line allowed accessibility to those who rely on transit or who use the downtown core for programs and services. The design of wrap-around services is important to the staff in making a meaningful contribution to the health and well-being of Indigenous people in the city. Having the capacity for staff to support each other's roles and to have clients able to access services and programs in one location is an integral component to the success of the Hub. Clients are easily referred to other programs and services and relationships and more easily and readily established and maintained with the people and operations being housed under one roof. Centering Indigenous lifeways in relationship building and operations was expressed as crucial in the interactions with and through the Hub. This can be seen in relying on stories to understand the needs of clients or using ceremony and cultural practices as central tenets in ensuring health and well-being. The traditional knowledge keeper also spoke of ensuring that the Hub relies on oral systems as a pathway to wellness and healing. Honouring both Western and Oral systems will strengthen the foundation of *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p*, a process that the Hub is already enacting.

There are many strengths evident in the operations of The Indigenous Hub however, there are also challenges that can create barriers when striving to enhance the overall health and well-being of Indigenous people in Calgary. All the stories told by staff, clients, partners and Elders referred to the colonial legacy of systemic and individual racism as an active contributing factor to the detriment of health and wellness in the city. Experiences of racism, both systematically and personally undermine the efforts of *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* and need to be addressed in order for positive, ethical, and sustainable relationships to endure. Systemic racism is mobilized in policies and procedures, fiscal decisions, and the justice system, for examples. Because the Hub is operated out of the Calgary Police Services building in downtown Calgary, the legacy of police and the justice system is one of racism and oppression which remain an on-going reality that the Hub has to contend with. Although the location is centralized and easily accessible for clients, the site lacks proper facilities (i.e., washroom exclusive to the Hub and kitchen capacity) making the delivery of programming a challenge. Because the Hub adapts to the environment and needs of the community there is an inevitable expansion of programs and services, thus human resource capacity will be challenged as there is only one coordinator for each service area. The strain is already being felt by some staff on the vastness of their area and not being able to focus on the multidimensional nature of the needs.

The traditional knowledge keeper discussed the importance of ceremonies and oral lifeways for Indigenous organizations and individuals to live well in the city. Since the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission in 2015, the need and desire for Elders' cultural teachings has significantly increased. Moreover, because there is an increasing need for Elders to share teachings, organizations need be responsible and committed to assisting Elders build human and knowledge capacity so that generational transfer of knowledge is feasible.

Through listening to the stories, *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyo'p* is shown to be an integral part of Calgary and is an important asset that is needed to promote, support, and enhance the well-being of all Indigenous people in Calgary. The Indigenous Hub is moving with the needs of the community and responding accordingly while looking to the past and the future to determine next steps.

Acknowledgements

The creation and sustained operations of *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyo'p* Indigenous Hub would not be possible without the generous gifts and contributions of the United Way of Calgary, Calgary Foundation and The City of Calgary for believing in this initiative and offering the support to bring it from a vision to its current reality. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Calgary Police Service for donating the gift of space. Without the generous gifts of the donors, the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyo'p* Indigenous Hub would not exist today.

Phase One *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyo'p* Indigenous Hub Evaluation

Introduction

This evaluation report encompasses both a broad and detailed overview of the Indigenous people, history, services, programs and partners associated with the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyo'p* (a place of conversation) Indigenous Hub and is also a reflection of the relationships that we, as the program evaluators, have not only identified but have forged with the Hub staff and clients. Our evaluation efforts emerge out of an Indigenous research paradigm within which we are better enabled to situate our own identities in the cultural landscape of this work, build relationships with the urban Indigenous community members, discuss the findings and themes from an Indigenous perspective and offer recommendations based in direct experience with the issues at hand. In keeping with the protocols that are involved with an Indigenous research paradigm, we introduce ourselves to demonstrate our investment in this work, maintain transparency with the reader and honor the interconnected web of relationships that are reflected in this report and how we, as the researchers, are implicated within this web.

Gabrielle Lindstrom.

Oki. Nitaniikoo Tsapinaki. Greetings. My name is Gabrielle Lindstrom (nee Weasel Head) and I am a member of the Niitsitapi, Kainaiwa First Nation which is a part of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Given that the City of Calgary now occupies the traditional territories of

the Niitsitapi, I come into this work with a deep sense of honor knowing that the rich history of this land is one that my people have a long-standing connection to. I was born and raised on Kainaiwa, more commonly known as the Blood Tribe, but have made my home in Mohkinstis, the City of Calgary, for the last ten years. I hold a Doctorate degree in Educational Research with a specialization in Adult Learning, an MA degree in Native American Studies and a BA degree in English Literature and am a full-time assistant professor teaching Indigenous and International Indigenous Studies at Mount Royal University. In addition to this, I am an active researcher in both academia and the community where I specialize in Indigenous homelessness, parenting assessment tools reform in the Child Intervention system, decolonizing Western systems of thought and understanding resilience from a distinct tribal worldview as an embodiment of self-determination. Undertaking the evaluation of the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyo'p* Indigenous Hub has brought its own gifts and learning to both my personal and professional life and for this, I am grateful and honored to sit at the “fire” with staff, clients and Elders who so graciously shared their stories.

Victoria (Vicki) Bouvier.

Taanishi, Vicki Bouvier, dishinikawshon niya Michif la rivyar roozh pi Boggy Creek d'ooshcinn ni kipischi didaan Calgary, Alberta. Hello, my Vicki Bouvier, I am of the Red River Settlement and of Boggy Creek, Manitoba but I live in Calgary, Alberta. My Métis ancestors are of the St. Francois Xavier community of the historic Red River Settlement and Boggy Creek, Manitoba. I was born and raised in Mohkinstis (Calgary) and have lived here my entire life. My education and professional path began in the field of Aboriginal early childhood education and over the next twenty years encompassed working in the fields of preschool education, Aboriginal youth leadership, and Aboriginal student programming and advising. I am currently a sessional instructor at SAIT, MRU, and the University of Calgary. I have completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Indigenous Studies, a Master of Arts Degree in the Werklund School of Education (WSE) at the University of Calgary and am currently a doctoral candidate in curriculum and learning in WSE. My research focuses on Métis ways of knowing, with my current research exploring how Métis people, born and raised in urban environments, practice and express their self-understandings. I am honoured to have been given the opportunity to listen and be gifted with the stories that have informed this evaluation. I want to thank all those for sharing their experiences and insights with us to tell the powerful story of the Hub with hope of making the Hub better for Indigenous people in the city of Calgary. Maarsii.

Context/ Background

Before we begin with providing the specific results of our evaluation efforts, we offer a detailed overview of the history and current issues from an Indigenous perspective which foregrounds many of the themes discussed throughout this report. In this way, the reader is provided a better sense of the historical, social, cultural and political antecedents which serve to

locate the impacts, challenges and recommendations within this broader scope and offers insight into the national urban context within which the Hub's services and programming have evolved. We first provide a broad discussion that draws on the literature surrounding the issues associated with the development of an urban Indigenous identity and ethos that are both unique to the City of Calgary as well as in more general terms. We then offer a brief history of the evolution of the friendship center movement in Canada, highlight what other friendship centers are doing in terms of developing centralized service collectives and offer a definition of what is meant by the term "impact" from a distinct Indigenous perspective.

Indigeneity and the Urban Experience.

The City of Calgary is located within the traditional territory of the Blackfoot people which include the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai Nations, and the territories of the Tsuu'tina Nation (Dene) and the Iyarhe Nakota Nation (Stoney Nakoda) which comprise of Bears Paw, Chiniki, and Wesley bands and is located within the boundaries of Treaty 7. The city of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 and Métis Local 87 within the historical Northwest Métis homeland. According to the 2016 Census, 35,195 Aboriginal people reside in Calgary (15,500 First Nation, 18,475 Métis, and 355 Inuit) (Statistics Canada, 2017). Furthermore, the Aboriginal populations in Calgary are diverse with respect to their home tribe or nation being outside of the city thus indicating that many are seeking opportunities or connections within this metropolis. The population of Indigenous people in the city of Calgary is increasing steadily which is and will continue to impact the programs and services that are needed to ensure healthy individuals, families, and communities.

Before the city of Calgary occupied this area, Aboriginal people had relationships with this place and have always travelled to and through this area in order to hunt, trade, harvest, and build kinship systems. Fort Calgary, established in 1875 (Fort Calgary, n.d.) was the beginning of the urbanization which continues steadfast into today. Many Aboriginal people utilized the small centre in transient ways for primarily trading and the acquisition of goods while others established homesteads and small businesses. This small snapshot of history indicates that people were using urban sites since their inception. However, although Aboriginal people were utilizing the provisions that these places provided, this is not to suggest that it was safe or prosperous to do so. As shown in the literature pertaining to Aboriginal urban experiences, cities are often exclusive and hostile to Aboriginal people, are conceptualized as incongruent to Aboriginal worldviews, values, and lifeways, and are places where Aboriginal people are deemed invisible or to not exist.

Relationships to and with place(s) are vital to Indigenous worldviews and the creation of and maintenance of identity. Connections to place create and affirm a sense of belonging to and with a dynamic kinship system of 'all my relations' which includes humans and more-than-human relatives interacting in specific environments and contexts (Deloria, 1999). Relationships to specific places are governed by creation stories that tell of how humans and more-than-humans originated in specific areas in what is now known as Canada today (Smith, 2012). The

creation stories tied people to specific geographical locations which hold specific worldviews, languages, values, protocols, and practices (Battiste & Henderson Youngblood, 2000). However, imperialism had and continues to have deep implications on Indigenous people's relationship to places. The connection to land through stories, songs, practices, and protocols was and continues to be attacked through colonial systems, especially in urban environments. Smith (2012) asserts "Western conceptions of space, of arrangements and display, of the relationship between people and the landscape, of culture as an object of study, have meant ... indigenous space has been colonized" (p. 53). Relationship with land is severely disrupted through seeing it as a commodity, not a relative. The colonization of land is executed through the erasure of place names and the renaming of places in English, and the surveying and mapping of land (Smith, 2012) through the legislated removal and relocation of people from their traditional territories and the erasure of Indigenous governance and the imposition of Western systems of government (for e.g., Indian Act, Métis scrip, Missing and murdered women and girls). Colonizing the land and Aboriginal people asserts and affirms power dynamics with the colonial systems having the ability to control space, places, and people (Smith, 2012). Understanding the role of colonialism has deep implications on the conceptualization of Aboriginal urban experiences. Urban centres are hubs of control, the center of power (Smith, 2012) thus informing Aboriginal experiences.

Urban Indigenous Ethos.

Urban Indigenous experiences dictate beliefs and values around identity and community that may be markedly different than those individuals who reside in a rural or reserve environment. Identifying these nuances in experiences facilitates both an increased accuracy in program evaluation efforts and a better overall understanding of Indigenous realities. In 1993, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples completed a Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues. Through this report the following themes were determined:

- 1) the survival of Aboriginal identity in an environment that is usually indifferent and often hostile to Aboriginal cultures;
- 2) the existing void in government policies to recognize and reinforce the goals of urban Aboriginal people;
- 3) the need for accessible and appropriate human services; and
- 4) and difficult questions around how urban Aboriginal people can gain an effective voice in governance and decision making. (p. 2)

Since then, research has primarily focussed on studying the movement of Aboriginal people to the cities, and more specifically, the identification processes individuals employ while adjusting to city life (see for e.g., Newhouse, 2000; and Peters, 2011). Whether Indigenous people are moving to or growing up in the city, living in the urban environment requires the need for culturally safe spaces, culturally grounded services, and programs that will allow Indigenous people to thrive (Peters & Andersen, 2013).

Cities are often observed as spaces that are inherently exclusionary to Aboriginal people (Peters, 1996, Lobo, 2001; Proulx, 2006; Peters, 2011; Peters & Lafond, 2013; Bang, Curley, Kessel, Marin, & Suzukovich III, 2014; Peters, Maaka, & Laliberte, 2014). Based on her literature analysis on the compatibility between urban and Aboriginality, Peters (1996) illustrates

the persisting thought that Aboriginal people, upon moving to the city, are assimilated into the urban environment which requires them to relinquish their worldview and cultural practices rendering them no longer Aboriginal. This issue elucidates that cities are not a place where Aboriginal culture and traditions can be expressed, practiced or belong therefore, Aboriginal people become less authentically Aboriginal when they live in the city. Furthermore, the urban space is viewed as requiring Aboriginal people to relinquish their cultural identities in order to thrive in the cities (Peters, 1996). For the urban Indigenous community that Susan Lobo (2001) worked with, the perception of and relations to place is vital as one defines themselves in relationship to the urban environment. The conceptualization of self in relation to city is fraught with challenges which becomes more acute when the non-Indigenous community view them as not belonging within the city landscape. Lobo (2001) indicates that other non-Indigenous urban residents assume that the Indigenous urban community is invisible because they do not fit the stereotypes of the vanishing Indian or they exist solely on reserves. This becomes largely problematic as it situates identity within an essentialist framework thus not allowing for the evolution of culture.

Bonita Lawrence (2004) conducted a research project on urban identities while trying to gain a more fulsome understanding of “how mixed-blood urban Native people understand and negotiate their own identities in relation to community and how external definitions and controls of Indianness have impacted their identities” (p. 1). The focus of her research included participants that are of mixed ancestry, which includes non-status Indians that have either been disenfranchised or have been disconnected from their community through colonization. Lawrence (2004) warns the reader that it is not worthwhile to use a primordial lens when understanding identity and neglecting the fluidity, malleability, and transformational capacity of identity.

Through his extensive discourse analysis of identity construction through Indigenous experience in North American cities, Craig Proulx (2006) stresses the profound role of racist ideologies on identity formation. Proulx (2006) states, “The process and consequences of the non-Aboriginal *power to define* still negatively affects the process of Aboriginal identification for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in cities” (p. 412). As Indigenous people are encountering racist discourse by non-Indigenous residents, they are internalizing those messages thus subsequently impacting their identity formation. Moreover, as Proulx (2006) points out, if Aboriginal people *are* visible in the city, they are assumed to be assimilated into mainstream culture, and are potentially deemed as no longer Aboriginal. Because of the experiences faced via racism and discrimination in urban environments and the increase of individuals and families moving to the cities, the friendship center movement began in response to these challenges.

The Friendship Center Movement of Canada.

Understanding what other organizations are doing or have done provides a vital component in our evaluation strategy. This contextual inquiry, sometimes referred to as an environmental or service allocation scan, offers critical information “about current social,

economic, technological, and political contexts, and to identify any potential short- and long-term shifts” (Graham, Evitts & Thomas-MacLean, 2008, p. 1022). Understanding the service milieu for organizations with comparable structuring to the AFCC can also guide future decision-making and evaluation pathways.

The National Association of Friendship Centres was born out of a response to the needs of Indigenous peoples migrating to urban areas. As cultural hubs, the centres are committed to building bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and providing a place for otherwise displaced Indigenous peoples due to migration from traditional territories (geographic), and non-status Indians and Metis (political disenfranchisement) as well non-Indigenous peoples wanting to be a part of or learn from the Indigenous community (25% of those served are non-indigenous). In terms of governance structure, all friendship centres are governed by a board of directors consisting of members of the urban Indigenous community, and are non-profit, registered charitable organizations with funding from private donors and the provincial and federal governments. Unique aspects of friendship centres in general are their accessibility and a non-discriminatory approach to service provision and relationship building evidenced in their mandate to serve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

Notable, each friendship centre is unique and reflective of the urban community it services. Thus, the histories of friendships centres are also unique to the urban environments which they serve but all are a part of the friendship centre movement and were established in response to the political climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Some such as the Toronto and Vancouver friendship centres have a well-defined operational vision and well-developed programming spheres while others reflect the challenges posed by changes in community demographics and leadership priorities. The goals are to match services with community need, particularly around providing and identifying “resources in response to the needs for food, shelter and clothing of Indigenous people migrating to these cities and towns” (Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, <http://ofifc.org/>). Aptly, the programs and services mirror the changes in the demographics of the urban Indigenous population, the challenges that are unique to communities and the evolving nature of needs and priorities over time.

Despite the changes brought with time, overarching themes of the Aboriginal Friendship Centres’ philosophy to service provision that seem to remain unaffected by evolutionary factors revolve around self-reliance, responsibility and self-determination based on community needs. As it was in the early days of program implementation, cultural programming at the friendship centres is framed around a solid base of Elders teachings that emerge from the storied landscape of the traditional territories that are now home to the cities and reflective of the heterogeneous urban Indigenous populations unique to the urban centres. Moreover, the centralized role of children is reflected in all friendship centre programming. The emphasis on Indigenous knowledge transmitted through Elder teachings as well as fostering the healthy growth and development of children illuminate an essential desire of Indigenous peoples: to be self-determining in how knowledge is acquired as evidenced through the commitment to ensure that traditional teachings are carried forward to the next generation. Thus, Indigenous peoples look

back to the past in order to inform future direction. Fostering self-reliance and responsibility are necessary responses to colonial dependencies that were created by the paternalistic approaches of government and reflect the Aboriginal Friendship Centres' priority areas around employment supports, education, and skills development and training.

Understanding trends in service provision is important in understanding impact on community needs. As indicated earlier, the Aboriginal friendship centres' respond to the needs of the community but there are also policy priorities that need to be considered when evaluating program effectiveness and impact. Accordingly, there will be variations in both priority areas, how services are delivered, resource development and funding allocations which are all dependent on the interplay between social, economic, cultural and political factors. Reports and other documents which are readily accessible on some friendship centre websites (see <http://ofifc.org/>) offer insight into how current policies affect operational mandates - such as the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples which is mandated to support the transition for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples to make the transition to urban centres so they are better able to adapt, develop vital connections with other the Indigenous populations, and maintain linkages to culture and identity.

Importantly, stakeholder and partnership engagement are factors that provide insight into priority areas. As such, partnerships with local schools and recreation organizations demonstrate a commitment to children's education and healthy development. For example, the Odawa Friendship Centre offers an alternative high school program in collaboration with the provincial education system and even makes this accessible to parents, so they can earn high school credits while supporting their children! Partnerships with the provincial and municipal justice systems as well as non-profit crime prevention organization such as the John Howard Centre highlight a sense of responsibility in reclaiming traditional practices around justice and a priority on healing and learning (restorative) as opposed to simply punishing (punitive) the accused. Collaborative programming with health-related service sectors, whether the focus is on mental wellness and addictions or physiological health, indicates an overall response to the poor health, obesity and diabetes rates, and addictions that plague the Indigenous population.

Specific the city of Calgary context, The Aboriginal Friendship of Calgary (AFCC) has a longstanding history in the City of Calgary. Prior the AFCC inception in 2004, there was an active friendship Centre in Calgary, but it closed its doors and was no longer operational in 2000. The dissolving of the AFCC in 2000 left a gap in the Indigenous community of Calgary thus prompting a number of community members to revive the much-needed organization in 2004. Since 2004, the AFCC has reformed and grown exponentially to provide programs and services to the Indigenous community in Calgary.

Highlighting some of the historical antecedents and shifts in priority areas of the Aboriginal friendship centres serving a large urban Indigenous population provide insights into the evolution of Indigenous peoples living in the city and the effectiveness of the friendship centres in responding to these evolving needs. Importantly, it also offers a solid foundation on which to commence an in-depth evaluation of the programs offered by the Aboriginal Friendship

Centre and positions the *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* Hub's services within the context of other Indigenous service-delivery organizations.

Centralized Service Collectives as “Hubs”.

Identifying the range of services and overall structure of urban hubs for Indigenous populations allows for a more nuanced understanding of how the *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* either fills a unique need or requires service additions. In terms of comprehensive collective service provision sites, or urban hubs as they are commonly known, the AFCC's addition of the *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* Indigenous Hub is a rather unique approach to responding to the needs of the urban Indigenous population located in the core of the urban centre. Through collaborative partnership and funding stakeholder arrangements, the friendship centres themselves can be defined as cultural hubs that offer a variety of services based on the needs of Indigenous community members. However, what differentiates the *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* Indigenous hub is that it is located at a separate site external to the AFCC. The physical extension of service provision is a unique approach in comparison to other cities with large urban Indigenous populations. For example, the City of Toronto has been developing the Anishnawbe Health Toronto Aboriginal Hub which is focused on a comprehensive provision of services that extend beyond health services to include retail, arts and educational services – the vision is expansive. In a more local context and in partnership with Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders in the City of Calgary, the United Way of Calgary has implemented the Indigenous Youth Hub which is geared to offering a place for Indigenous youth to reconnect with Indigenous culture and promote healing and reconciliation. The *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* Indigenous hub is easily accessed through the city's transit system and as such, responds to the unique needs of the Indigenous population in Calgary's downtown core. Importantly, the needs of the Indigenous populations cannot be understood within a Western cultural framework. Indigenous experiences and perspectives are culturally-determined. Thus, developing definitions that are unique to the Indigenous population not only provides for accuracy in assessment of services, but also honors the heterogeneity of Indigenous culture.

Defining Impact.

Evaluation strategies must be informed by and located from an Indigenous experiential paradigm which includes re-positioning common assessment markers, such as service 'impact' used in Western program evaluation frameworks. When considering the impact of the *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* on the lives of Indigenous peoples in urban centres, we need to understand what the people value for living a good life. This is a vital aspect of self-determination and one which is often missed in outcomes-based, Western evaluation frameworks. According to our evaluation efforts, the impact of the Hub services is most felt when the processes involved in building and maintaining ethical mutually beneficial relationships, creating a sense of belonging and community, and fostering the

mind/body/emotion/spiritual dimensions are acknowledged and supported. The presence of community and individual reciprocal relationships are central factors in how Indigenous people access and experience the Hub and it is vital to have the individual feel as if they are part of community and vice-versa which provides insight into what is valued most. Another crucial factor that determines impact is the availability of a safe space to practice spirituality which, as one staff member at the Hub stated, is “the real backbone of our program, the spiritual aspect of it.”

Methodology

The evaluation of the programs and services offered through the *iitaohkanitsini 'kotsiiyio 'p* Indigenous Hub was undertaken in accordance with research ethics and protocols as contextualized within an Indigenous research paradigm. Indigenous research can be defined as a formal process of inquiry positioned within an Indigenous philosophical paradigm undertaken to not only better understand the world, but to make a contribution to an Indigenous collective consciousness for the betterment of the Indigenous community through the maintenance of specific ethics and protocols grounded in notions of researcher reflexivity and responsibility. Although a detailed overview of the nature of Indigenous research is beyond the scope of this report, it is vital to highlight that as Indigenous researchers, we approached this evaluation project with a keen awareness of how we are both accountable to the relationship-building process but also the tensions involved in attempting to do program evaluation from a Western framework of assessment. Thus, gathering the stories of partners/collaborators, clients, staff and Elders was a vital component not only in the sense that they are most directly impacted by the issues contained in our evaluation, but also that as Indigenous people, they are in the best decision to know the benefits, challenges and opportunities.

To begin, we looked to the literature and web-based resources to help in positioning the AFCC and Hub within the broader cultural landscape of urban Indigenous-led organizations. We then began gathering stories of those working within the Hub locale that commenced in a conversation with a staff member, Del Majore (name used with permission), from a partner organization whose office is located out of the SoRCE and who carried detailed knowledge of partnership arrangement, client need, the colonial legacy and future opportunities. He also held discrete knowledge of the seed stages of the Hub’s evolution from a vision for change to an actual physical space. Hence, his perspectives were an important aspect of the overall story of the Hub. We then had a conversation with a well-respected Blackfoot Elder who offered significant insight into the potential of the Hub as a space for ceremony, relationships, cross-cultural knowledge exchange and enabling Elders to build their capacity as traditional knowledge holders. We conducted talking circles with seven clients and seven program coordinators whose voices brought unique perspectives from distinct locations. All individual and group dialogues were recorded, with consent, and transcribed. The transcript data were analyzed using an Indigenous approach to data analysis informed by the work of Indigenous scholar Vine Deloria

Jr. (1999) through which findings are organized within a relational sphere of connections and every attempt is made to discourage the reduction of the stories to fragmentary components. We wished to honor the spirit of relationships and the webs of meaning that connect the stories together within a unified whole. Although the overall themes of the stories have been structured according to overarching themes that we identified through our data analysis in order to enhance overall readability and accessibility of the report, the interconnected nature of the stories remain intact.

The Hub Client Service Pathways

The Indigenous Hub – *iitaohkanitsini’kotsiiyio’p* is a multidimensional organization that has multiple pathways for clients to navigate in order to accommodate their needs. The Hub provides supports and services in seven areas: Language and Cultural Programming, Education and Training, Employment Services, Health Services, Women’s Health and Wellbeing Services/Youth Programming, Crime Prevention and Community Reintegration Program, and Community Navigator to combat the Opioid Epidemic (Aboriginal Friend Centre of Calgary, 2018). In addition to the core programs and services, the Hub offers direct service which may include computer or phone access, coffee and snacks, or just a quiet place to sit and relax. The Hub is also unique in that they have core programming and services that are funded by the respective donors, while also hosting other programs and services under the larger Aboriginal Friend Centre of Calgary umbrella such as: Outreach and Housing. When an individual or family first enters the Hub, a determination of their initial needs is made. Depending on the needs of the client, they can then access anywhere between one or all of the programs and services as appropriate. This is the unique nature of the Hub as all the services are available in one location. The client, if needing education and employment training and housing, would speak to the differing coordinators, but all from one place.

The Hub will be using the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to collect information pertinent to the service and program deliveries, a service that is resourced through the Calgary Homeless Foundation. The software will be specifically designed to accommodate the unique nature and needs of the Hub. HMIS can be used to record both quantitative and qualitative data enabling the staff to keep information for both reporting and future pathways of the Hub.

Current Usage and Forecasting Trends

The Hub has formed relationships with 4550 Indigenous and non-Indigenous people since July 2018 and up to February 20, 2019. The break down of usage is found below:

Table 1

Dates	July 2018-February 28, 2019
Total # of clients served	4550
Program Area	Number served

Referrals/Info. Sharing	508
Addictions referrals/support	36
Justice	61
Health	239
Housing	96
Employment	204
Education	54
Culture	390
Men's and Women's programs	167
Coffee, snacks, food	2700
Miscellaneous (computers, space)	358

It must be noted that in analyzing the numbers, there is a marked discrepancy in terms of how many people accessed the Hub in comparison to the sum total of clients accessing the specific programs and services. This misalignment in numbers seems to be due to a few key factors: 1) staff may be tracking multiple service areas for one client; 2) the current tracking system is not optimal which leads to duplication in tracking. The HMIS system that will be implemented should help mitigate the challenges in tracking client usage. In terms of trends in usage, there is a steady increase of clients accessing the Hub on a monthly basis which points to a growing need for the services. Further, as more and more Indigenous people become aware of the Hub, we predict an even greater increase in usage. Notable in the numbers is the obvious fact that clients access the Hub simply to have a coffee, something to eat and to access the space. The cultural program is by the far the program that is most accessed which is not surprising in light of the stories that were shared by clients, staff, partners and Elders. As the numbers can attest to, the Hub is regularly accessed and the client trends in usage point to a steady increase in demand. Trends in specific program usage demonstrates that culture matters to urban Indigenous people and if space is made available, Indigenous culture is a fixture in the urban landscape. Implementing the HMIS tracking system can ensure increased accuracy and highlight program areas that may require more resources.

Gifts: Enhancing the Overall Health and Wellness of the Indigenous urban Population and Broader Community

The following section outlines the positive, often life-changing, impacts the Hub has had on clients, staff, partner stakeholders and the broader urban community. Rather than defining this section in terms of impacts exclusively, which tends to denote a more Western approach to

understanding service provisioning, we chose to conceptualize impact in terms of “gifts” which suggests a relational aspect. Within an Indigenous paradigm, gifting is a process that emphasizes a reciprocal exchange which forms a foundation for future relationship building and is reflective of how many of the clients perceive the Hub, as a gift in their lives. In listening to the diverse voices of a variety of stakeholders, it was revealed that the Hub matters to lives of the clients. It brings all people together – clients, staff and the broader community – and offers safety from the dangers of the urban environment in terms of the violence, crime, racism and discrimination that many Indigenous people face or are at-risk of facing. The staff make a difference in the lives of clients and are a consistent source of non-judgemental support, are accepting and loving and always there to set clients back on track. Below we highlight some of the benefits from the client perspective.

Figure 1. Gifts/Impact of the Hub



Gifts to the Clients.

The talking circle held with the clients revealed the many beneficial ways that the Hub enhanced their lives. These include factors related to the location, programming, and general environmental atmosphere which not only fostered trust and an overall sense of relational and cultural safety, but also instilled a sense of belonging. One of the key strengths of the Hub is that it is easily accessible. Access to services was seen as vital and this was especially important to the urban Indigenous homeless population who often gather around the downtown transit line. The fact that the Hub is located in central downtown and directly on the transit line are key factors in determining the level of access. Throughout the talking circle with clients, it was

mentioned many times over that the location made it ideal and combined with the wrap-around services, made it a first-choice locale for clients to gather. Moreover, the co-located nature service provision was seen as a central feature of the Hub and determined the level of impact of the Hub within the Indigenous community in Calgary. Having the ability to access services and programs in one location is integral for an individual to feel a sense of connection and belonging and to feel at “home.” Notable was the variety of cultural programming and activities that are offered at the Hub which serve as a much-needed outlet for clients to release a range of emotions.

Cultural Programming.

The programming, service provision and resources offered by the Hub are seen as another key strength and are critical components in the lives of Indigenous clients for several reasons. Not only do they offer a vital connection to culture and foster positive connections to Indigenous identity but access to Elder teachings and ceremony provide spiritual grounding, and the variety of cultural activities offer an overall link to Indigenous ways of knowing and being within an urban context – a context that is not easily navigable by many members of the urban Indigenous population. Related to identity, information published in a research brief by the City of Calgary (Family, Community Support Services, 2014) identified the complexities of Indigenous identity. Although this report was published years before the opening of the Hub, the information provides a foundational conceptualization of how the Hub’s activities could help to either support the formation, or solidify a connection, to a positive Indigenous identity. Factors that were identified as contributing to Indigenous identity included cultural activities that connected people to the land and/or natural environment, traditional cultural activities, strong, healthy family connections, and opportunities for social connectedness. In terms of programming, the Hub, through their language and culture program, currently offers cultural teachings, ceremonies and practices that include sweat lodges that are ongoing and open to all clients, daily smudging and access to medicines, Indigenous language classes (which are offered at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre location), women and men’s programming, and other cultural activities such as drum making, beading, and crafts. It is important to note, however, that the overall programs being offered, especially the Opiate response program, all involve the inclusion of some elements of Indigenous culture. Specifically, the culture program involves storytelling, singing, drumming, dancing, ceremony, opportunities for connecting to the broader urban Indigenous community, and validation of Indigenous identity. Indeed, the culture program is really a link to indigenous traditions and histories and is critical in the maintenance of indigenous identity. Notably, one client described the crafts activities as therapeutic and many others, both staff and clients alike, are keenly aware that language and cultural practices are at a real risk of being lost. The Hub also offers a safe space for clients and staff to practice spirituality and to feel supported in it. One staff stated, “the need for ceremony in the city is really big. I see that since I came to the city, the need for ceremony to help the families, and people come to a place where they can get [it] ... that’s going to be I think, the real backbone of our program, is that, the spiritual aspect of it.” Spirituality was seen as a part of the health and well-being of any Indigenous person.

Importantly, in evaluating the culture program and services it became clear that cultural teachings can bridge the gap between cultural isolation/alienation in an urban context and prevent Indigenous culture from being misinterpreted, thus offering opportunities for the creation of an ethical space. The culture program encompasses the teachings of the living world, respect for the natural environment through the culture camps and language classes. It offers an entrance to Indigenous life-worlds. The City of Calgary's Indigenous Policy Framework report (IPF, 2017), a document which offers significant insight into the relational worldview of Indigenous peoples and how this must act as a foundational premise for understanding a shared history, acknowledges and recognizes the need to embed traditional knowledge when creating Indigenous-specific programming, informing policy and utilizing Elder guidance as a basis for future relationships. The Hub's cultural component is reflective of the City's commitment to incorporating Indigenous knowledge into a cityscape. Moreover, the White Goose Flying report (2016), another policy document created by Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC) purposefully identifies the Calls to Actions issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report (TRC, 2015) that can be implemented with the City. Members of CAUAC highlighted Call to Actions 22 and 48 which address the importance of healing and self-determination through spiritual practices (TRC, 2015). Importantly, the Hub's service provisioning within the cultural programming framework responds to these municipal and national policy perspectives and demonstrates a commitment by the urban Indigenous community to remaining accountable to not only envisioning but realizing the shared history (IPF, 2017) of the space occupied by the City of Calgary. An appropriate moniker to capture the essence of the Hub's cultural programming is encapsulated in the following: speaking Indigenous, being indigenous, knowing indigenous, relating indigenous.

The sharing circles with staff and clients, they suggested the notion of reciprocity as being embedded within the cultural programming. The clients need the Hub and the Hub needs the clients to operate. When the clients feel supported, they can go out and support other Indigenous people who are also struggling. The cultural programming fosters a cyclical motion of support which becomes especially important in the city environment and one that must be sustainable. In light of previous research done around the need for supporting and fostering Indigenous identity, this is a significant finding. For example, the authors of the City of Calgary research brief identified contemporary challenges associated with living in a colonized social context as an ongoing risk to the positive maintenance of Indigenous identity and although Indigenous identity is fostered in a supportive environment, Indigenous selfhood is not often sustainable in Western society. Thus, if Indigenous identity is to be supported, then "programming for Aboriginal people definitely needs to include aspects of 'staying power.' It must have long-term ... effects and result in skills, knowledge or capacities that the program participants can apply to their lives and in interactions with mainstream society" (FCSS, 2014, pp. 15-16). Overall, understanding the need for clients to access cultural teachings and knowledge is crucial in understanding the success of the Hub's program and services.

Relationships, belonging and connections.

It was stated many over times that creating and sustaining positive relationships based in trust, care and compassion were determining factors in whether or not clients felt as if they belonged. The Hub is a safe and comforting space – it doesn't have to be a space to meet people but just a sanctuary from the outside world and safety was key in enabling the participants to utilize the Hub. The Hub is a place where the clients can teach and learn in traditional ways and to pass on those teachings to the young people, to remember their responsibilities to be teachers. This is a very important aspect and clients spoke to this notion with a strong sense of pride. Importantly, the Hub meant home and family and the programs were not seen as being forced on people. Indeed, many go there not just because they *need* something but because they *want* to be there which is reflective of how the Hub is a place to connect with others. For example, one client remarked how as an Indigenous man, he can connect to others through the men's program as well as to the Indigenous community in general – as a place for relationships. These relationships are grounded in the notion of support – staff support clients and in turn, clients support each other.

The interconnected aspects of the Hub constitute a relational framework in the sense that all programs and activities are interconnected and removing one aspect has an effect on others which impacts both clients and staff. The interconnected service pathways of both the Hub and the SoRCE means that in many cases, they share a circle of referrals that they exchange and in turn, the clients are in a continuous process of either fostering new relationships or sustaining existing one – many come to the Hub just to interact with other clients as well as the staff. One client shared how she needs to feel accepted even when she is not at her best. This highlights a desperate need to belong and the vital role of relationships in the Hub. It is also worth highlighting that staff play a crucial role right at the point of contact and their interaction with clients will often dictate how clients 'are' in the world that day, how they interact in the world. The notion of feeling accepted, that your presence is wanted, is essential for building good relationships and it carries a ripple effect that could be either positive or negative.

The conversation we had with Del Majore, founding collaborator with the Hub and an Indigenous staff member with Alberta Mental Health whose office is located out of the SoRCE, remarked that the Hub has created an environment where Aboriginal people can see themselves as part of the urban landscape. He compared the Hub environment to an inter-tribal camp where many nations come to the "home fire" to build relationships and that the space is really a place that fosters a sense of "home" and belonging. As noted in the City of Calgary research brief (FCSS, 2014) and reflected in the interviews and sharing circles held with staff and clients, relational connections are crucial to fostering a sense of identity and are important in understanding the impact that the Hub is already having in the lives of Aboriginal people in Calgary. It is a gathering place for Aboriginal people to come and connect with each other and build relationships. One client remarked, "So it's kind of like an extended family I guess, being here. And it doesn't matter what nation you're from. Blackfoot, Cree, Ojibwe, we all kind of help one another out." Emerging from the talking circle with clients were notions of connectivity

and relationships – a web of connections within which everything is related – community, care, support, and sharing.

Contributing to these relationships is the notion of safety. The transcripts from the interviews and sharing circles revealed that clients feel safe to share their story to staff who they consider as people who will not only listen but also care about the clients in a way where they feel heard. The notion of “Indigenous-centeredness” emerged in one of the partner interviews and was seen as the framework for relationships in which basic needs are addressed (clothing, food, housing, etc.), barriers associated with mental health, addictions and poverty are minimized, Indigenous identity is fostered and maintained and the clients are treated like human beings – their dignity as human-beings is reinforced. One interview participant shared how the clients are accepted for who they are: “They’re coming here because we have a safe environment out in the lobby, as far as they’re going to respect the person for who they are, they’re not going to judge them for being drunk, they can come in when they’re drunk, they can act up to a certain degree, as long as they’re not hurting nobody or themselves, they’re allowed to stay.” Well-being for clients is associated with having a voice and an important aspect in feeling as if one is an active participant in the environment which contributes to an overall sense of agency in one’s life. Having the Hub as a place/space where individuals can just relax is a much-needed refuge from the harsh conditions of the street, or just a way for them to have some healing time for themselves. Additionally, building relationships with clients involves finding out about the personal history of clients, who they are and where they came from, their likes and dislike – it involves approaching clients within an ethic of care and taking the time to care.

This caring approach is encapsulated within the theoretical concept of cultural safety which is a specific approach to service provision. Practitioners and service providers understand that culture matters, that maintaining the dignity of clients involves affording the necessary space and support in a way that ensures Indigenous identity is central to any relational arrangement. Sharing stories and personal narratives in a non-judgmental atmosphere in order to connect and build relationships is one example of an approach to service provision that encompasses aspects of cultural safety which in turn fosters a sense of belonging. The Hub provides a place where individuals can come together and share their experiences with each other and with staff to not only form relationships but also feel connected to other Indigenous people in the city. One client shared that, “we can actually meet and share with one another which is a good thing you know if you’ve got problems.” An important feature of cultural safety within an Indigenous worldview is to promote a sense of reciprocity and clients felt as if they needed to offer something back to the space with the primary means being in the support they offer each other. This reciprocal relational exchange must be done in a trusting environment so that confidence and capacity are built.

Confidence, trust and capacity-building

In the talking circle with clients, it became clear that there was a strength found in sharing stories as a vehicle for support which fosters the ability for clients to determine their own path to capacity-building and self-empowerment which is best achieved in a trusting

environment within which the clients can feel confident enough to share with each other and with staff. Whether clients have a sense of trust in the staff has been a central factor in determining the success of the Hub and the measure of its impact. Forming and sustaining trust with the Aboriginal community is important to relationship building. Clients repeatedly voiced that they need to feel welcomed and to trust that the Hub space will be a safe and welcoming one. When the clients feel safe and welcomed, their strengths are fostered and they are empowered to make positive changes in their lives. During our circle dialogue, the clients felt empowered to use their voice in the hope that it will lead to changes. One significant theme that emerged from the talking circles with both staff and clients is how crucial it is for clients to feel like they are able to use their expertise at the Hub which enables them to feel a sense of autonomy, connectedness, and belonging. Ensuring that services and programs are structured proactively and in ways that offer clients opportunities to share their knowledge with others builds confidence and self-esteem which were components of the men's and women's groups as well as cultural crafts activities. Like the AFCC, the presence of the Hub in building the confidence, trust and capacity of is grounded within a model of inclusivity in which all are welcomed to the sit at the "fire."

Inclusiveness

The interviews and talking circles with clients and staff emphasized that although the focus of services is on Indigenous peoples, the Hub is mandated to serve everyone. If non-Indigenous clients want to build a relationship with Indigenous peoples, learn more about the culture or access programming, they are just as welcome as everyone else. The Hub does not turn anyone away. Additionally, the services and programming are not just about serving the homeless population, although they make a significant portion of the clients. However, many people who are not experiencing major social and economic barriers need to see the Hub as offering programs and services that are relevant to them too. To be sure, the impact of the men's and women's groups appeals to everyone wanting to connect with culture and the findings of our evaluation point to how these programs are not limited to the homeless population. Many other urban Indigenous peoples access them as well. Although clients also expressed gratitude for services, there was also no pressure to access services, but instead, they felt equally welcomed to just access the drop-in space and be themselves without the pressure of feeling "serviced." Our evaluative scope revealed that inclusivity is not just about who accesses the space but also about being responsive to the specific reasons that brought them there. Furthermore, the clients shared how they appreciated that the Hub was equally welcoming of all Indigenous peoples regardless of their tribal nationhood or community affiliation. The Hub is really seen as a gathering space for creating kinship systems and offers all a chance to meet people, build relationships and make connections – it is a family that transcends tribal nationhood and community allegiance. One client shared that she feels the creation of the Hub is the best thing that could have happened in the city. Another stated that although she is isolated and rejected from own family, the people she has met at the Hub are her new family and provides space for her to connect with her Indigenous culture. Another client who is not from the City of Calgary or surrounding First

Nations communities shared how some Friendship centres in other cities can be alienating and not accepting of all Indigenous groups, as if they operate on a basis of exclusive memberships and are welcoming only to those from the traditional territory on which that particular urban environment is located.

Overall, the positive effects that the many gifts offered by the Hub have had in enhancing the lives of the urban Indigenous population points to a growing need within the urban environment of a deep and expressed desire for Indigenous people to maintain connections to traditional culture and Indigenous identity on their terms. At the Hub, the clients are building relationships, a sense of belonging prevails and cultural practices are being sustained. These are vital determinants in the overall well-being of Indigenous peoples and demonstrate how reconciliation can look within an Indigenous-led organization that works to bring all people to the “fire.” In the section below, we offer some key highlights that emerged in the evaluation process with regards to staff perspectives.

Gifts to the Staff.

During our talking circle with staff, all shared how the operations of the Hub advanced an opportunity for them to utilize their expertise, build supportive relationships with one other and also make meaningful and strategic connections to the broader service-providing agencies within the urban environment. Moreover, it was emphasized on several occasions that the Hub is now an essential fixture of downtown and the only one that is there specifically for Indigenous peoples. Although the work is challenging, the staff spoke of their respective roles with high esteem and told us a story of their relationships with clients and the broader community that was reflective of a desire to make a contribution in building a strong urban Indigenous identity. In this section, we highlight some of these gifts from a service provision context and begin with the wrap-around service approach and how this has enhanced the skill-sets of the Hub’s program coordinators.

Wrap-around services.

As alluded to earlier, the wrap-around services enable the staff at the Hub to draw on a variety of interconnected services that not only ensures clients are receiving necessary supports at the right time and in the most effective way but that the staff themselves are also feeling supported given the that if they do not have the relevant resources for clients, they are able to refer them to resources that can respond more effectively in that moment. Regarding this multi-service delivery approach, one staff emphasized, “Family issues, addiction issues, what ever it may be, we’re very fortunate in that we have these types of programs in place here for people.” The benefits of this service delivery approach are that it responds to the complex needs of clients since many are experiencing a combination of barriers that require a holistic model of care that not only attends to basic needs but is premised within Indigenous cultural values of truth, direct experience, humility, wisdom and inspiring clients. From a practical standpoint, the wrap-around services include employment and education services, health services, supports for those struggling with addictions, and cultural and spiritual supports. Providing food resources is also a

large part of being responsive to needs. The programs themselves are not exclusive to addressing one specific need but often branch out to other areas. For example, the employment program is not only about connecting clients with employers, but also involves goal setting, future direction and guidance, but sometimes the clients simply want to connect relationally. Staff will then organize a movie-night and refer them to the men's groups. Holding a combination of training and experience in providing relevant and sensitive guidance to clients, the staff know the resources that are located in the city and how to connect clients to those resources. In one of the interviews, it was revealed that in addition to on-site services, outreach work to other Indigenous programs in the city that serve Indigenous population has been an important factor in not only building the resource base but encouraging other service providers to use the Hub space for their service delivery – in the words of the staff member, “inviting them into the circle.” All the services and program areas ebb and flow between each other – there is a real fluidity of movement between the services and the interconnected nature of services acts as a mechanism of support for staff.

Supporting each other.

In the talking circle held with staff, it was found that the Hub offered a mutually supportive environment. The staff felt they could lean on one another with the knowledge that they all had the same goal in mind, to provide the best level of caring support to all who enter the Hub's space. Because there are many Indigenous people accessing the Hub, the staff try to meet them where they are at and can respond to being knowledgeable around the root causes of barriers enables them strategize service and program components and they can refer to other agencies if need be. Supporting one another as they provide direct services was crucial to the well-being of both clients and staff. Staff shared how they often will “walk with them” to other program areas and are confident that the other program coordinators will then take over. The supportive milieu also means that staff could effectively follow up with clients and given that all programs are on-site, communication lines are strengthened. They can also build on the work of each other and on the work being done in the broader community. The interconnected nature of their roles also branches into the community as evidenced in the words of one staff member: “our involvement in the community is not only attending meetings but knowing what's out there; We're, we're just part of a web.” The staff are aware that supporting each other involves knowing how to effectively do their job and that one cannot rush the relationship building aspect that is so central to their roles – in other words, they need to be patient with one another.

The importance of stories.

Much of knowing what clients need requires listening closely to their stories and picking up on relevant details that will offer a framework for service and support allocations. Emerging from the talking circle with staff was the clear evolution of a pathway which was made possible through story-sharing. Again, the assessment process did not necessarily involve filling out forms as the initial procedure for intake. As clients shared their stories, a picture of their personal history and current situation emerged. Staff were also able to determine what is missing in their lives, where their strengths lay, what resources are needed to enhance their well-being,

how their time is spent, and what does ‘normal’ look like for them. It really is a process of assessing through story. Basically, in prompting clients to, “Tell me your story” a process of needs assessment is occurring through which staff are listening and attuned to the deeper meanings but also to when sharing a story is simply all the client may be looking for – someone just to listen or they may have no immediate need. The staff are aware that the role of the clients’ stories as a culturally appropriate evaluation technique and offers a human-side to assessment that extends beyond filling out forms and using formal assessment or methods that are based in static, standardized Western approaches.

The wrap-around nature of services, mutually supportive and interconnected environment of the Hub and the value of story-sharing as an embedded practice reifying the relevancy of Indigenous worldviews in a modern context all served as gifts which enabled staff to feel as if they are making a difference in the lives of the clients. Our evaluation efforts found that these gifts were not only limited to the clients and staff of the Hub but also were extended to partnership arrangements and the broader urban community in general.

Gifts to Partner Stakeholders and Urban Community.

The interconnected nature of service pathways that constitute the programs and services framework of the Hub enabled a variety of benefits to be felt by not only the collaborative partnership arrangements that underlie the overall organizational structure of the Hub, but also the broader community. In this section we highlight key benefits which include a complex and efficient referral network, a large base of on-site services at the Hub, cross-cultural learning, and community capacity-building.

Referral networks.

The Hub is located on the same floor and directly next to the SoRCE, which is also an on-site referral organization that offers specific social supports. Both organizations work in tandem with one another to ensure that they are meeting the needs of both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients they are mandated to serve. Trust is a vital component in this referral network and although achieving optimal levels of trust is constantly a work in progress, the service network is not only built on trust but maintained within the interagency partnership arrangements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together in confidence – trusting each other that they are all working towards the same goal and that they have a large resource pool to draw on. However, the referral network is not simply a resource pool but instead, it is crucial to understand “partnerships as relationships – understanding that relational perspective is key” (Del Majore). If the Hub or the SoRCE do not have the resources on-site, then clients are referred to other service provision agencies in the City of Calgary. For example, clients experiencing addictions are referred to appropriate treatment centres via the Opiate Response program housed at the Hub. This is but one example of how the referral network is structured. In addition to referrals, the Hub staff also encourage other support agencies to work out of the Hub space.

On-site services.

Our evaluation revealed that outreach efforts are sometimes undertaken by the Hub staff with the expressed desire of bringing resources to the clients. The community connector person at the Hub currently scopes out the urban environment to determine what services are available to the clients. Knowledgeable about service agencies in the city is crucial in determining the feasibility of services that could be successfully brought on-site. Not only do these efforts demonstrate a commitment to care, but they also offer the broader service provision agencies the opportunity to liaise with the Hub staff and become accustomed to partnering with an Indigenous-led organization. One example of this practice is the free legal advice clinics offered on-site to clients from lawyers from Calgary Legal Guidance.

Broader community benefits.

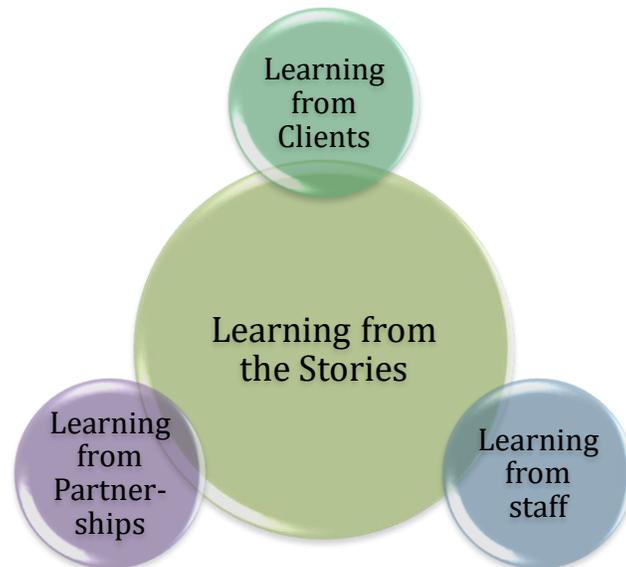
In terms of the gifts offered to the larger urban community, the Hub is really on its way to being considered a staple in the downtown core where people from all walk of life can gather to access services, connect with Indigenous culture, or simply create relationships. The interviews and talking circles revealed how, even in the planning stages, the Indigenous community was involved in creating a vision of what the space could be. Liaising and collaborating with the City Police Services brought a new dimension to the relationship between Indigenous people and the justice system in the sense that instead of imposing sanctions and policies, the police service system was working on planning with the Indigenous community to create a welcoming and safe environment for clients. Having the support of the Indigenous community is vital and if the space is welcoming, and indigenous relational protocols are being followed, then that support will continue to grow. When considering and evaluating how the Hub has affected the larger urban community, it was emphasized in all individual interview and group conversations that first and foremost, the Hub was a space that was built to benefit the entire community and not only focused on serving the needs of individual clients – it is there for “the whole circle of people” (Interview, Del Majore). The presence of the Hub also means that other Indigenous serving organizations and Indigenous people working in them are not feeling overburdened or burned out. Another important component is how the Hub is a place where people can learn within an intercultural environment. In addition to the many different First Nations and Indigenous communities who gather in the space, there are a number of non-Indigenous people, whether they be clients or from other service agencies, who also access the space. Opportunities for cross-cultural learning are optimized and many of the Hub staff often find themselves dispelling myths and commonly held stereotypes that are a constant barrier to good relations. The City of Calgary’s Indigenous Policy Framework report (2017) also documents a narrative born out of urban Indigenous people’s experiences with being stereotyped. To counteract these challenges, the City has committed to “[a]ctively listening, working with, and learning from urban Indigenous communities, leadership, and organizations in authentic and accountable ways will greatly assist in creating a more inclusive and equitable Calgary truly reflective of its shared history and foundations” (p. 13). The gift of the Hub is that it offers a space through which the City can be accountable to the kind of meaningful collaboration described here. Moreover, the

findings and recommendations contained within this evaluation report offer the City an excellent opportunity to live up to the commitments outlined in the Indigenous Policy Framework (2017). The Mayor's Proclamation of Reconciliation, articulated in 2016, offered a blueprint for the municipal-based establishment of the Indigenous Hub and aligns with the Hub's inception as being sparked by the Calls to Actions as issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report (2015). Indeed, our evaluation efforts foster a deepened understanding of the role of the non-Indigenous partnership stakeholders as being active agents in building relationships with the Indigenous community. Partnerships are based on relationality and building ethical relationships. Although the Indigenous organizations work together to provide the services to the clients, they need to also have a good understanding of the pathways of services in the entire city, thus building ethical relationships with non-Indigenous organizations is crucial. For example, building partnerships with hospitals to ensure that clients are treated as human-beings and not burdens on the system. This kind of advocacy does not only counteract the painful effects for clients experiencing racism in the healthcare system but offers non-Indigenous service providers the opportunity to reframe their thinking about how they treat Indigenous peoples. The greatest gift offered by the presence of the Hub is that of relationships since they are at the core of all interactions.

This section of our report has offered an evaluative overview of the many benefits that the operations, services and programs associated with the Hub have had on clients, staff, partner organizations and the broader urban community in general. Using the voices of both staff and clients and informed by municipal policy perspectives, we highlighted how the Hub has served to strengthen Indigenous identity through its culture programs, foster relationships and a sense of belonging, and offer multiple opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to gather in a safe and non-judgemental place in order to forge a pathway towards reconciliation that responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Actions. As with any newly formed organization, there are expected challenges that also require careful consideration. In telling the story of how these challenges emerged in the Hub operations, we are also gifted with significant learning opportunities that illuminate a pathway towards building on the momentum of the Hub's current success. Below, we offer some key highlights of what could be learned from the stories we gathered.

Learning from the stories: Understanding the Challenges to Enhance the Overall Health and Wellness of the Indigenous urban Population and Broader Community

Figure 2. Understanding Challenges



Storytelling is an integral part of Indigenous knowledge systems and further, deriving wisdom and teachings from the stories are pertinent to understanding our past and present, and the next courses of actions to ensure the betterment and enhanced overall health and wellness of all. Through listening to the stories of individuals who engage with and through the Hub, staff, partnerships and a traditional knowledge keeper, specific challenges were identified in relation to the nature of the physical space, the new and evolving nature of the Hub, and the colonial legacies of racism and discrimination. Although there were challenges discussed, we perceive and acknowledgement that these barriers are opportunities to strengthen the programs and services being offered to the Indigenous urban population while creating new future pathways. The following sections outline the teachings that were yielded from listening to the stories of the clients, staff, partner organizations, and knowledge keepers.

Learning from Client Stories.

Physical Space / Police legacy.

The clients' stories spoke of gratitude and appreciation for the programs and services that the Hub offered to the Indigenous community in Calgary with the location as paramount for the clients being able to access the Hub. However, the physical space is a challenge that was spoke about from some of the clients' perspectives. Prior to the Hub, the ground level space was occupied by the Calgary Police Services (CPS). Through the creation of the Indigenous Hub, the Calgary Police Services donated the space to the AFCC while maintaining the operating floors above. Because the CPS still operates services in the building, there are restrictions within usage of the space that the Hub now occupies that hinder clients in having a complete sense of safety

and freedom in the space. Limitations to the space include accessibility to the bathroom, gym facility, and the front entrance. Because of security and safety concerns with CPS still operating in the building and the officers using the same bathrooms, clients need to be accompanied to and from the bathroom. This was acknowledged as an impediment to their privacy and sense of freedom in accessing the space. Currently, there is a partition at the front entrance wherein clients have to be granted permission in order to move through the locked door. Although some clients understood the barrier was in place for safety reasons and a remaining piece of CPS, some perceived it as a strict barrier to accessing services and feeling welcomed into the space. The clients also identified the emotional stress that the space and its affiliation with the police legacy evokes. Having the Hub located within the CPS causes stress for some clients due the colonial legacy of the police services and Indigenous people. Some clients felt uneasy in accessing the space because of their direct experience with racism in the justice system. The Hub, as identified by the clients, is a space to which they want to feel a sense of autonomy, belonging, and agency, and due to the physical nature largely due to the CPS, this is being impeded. This is not to suggest that this challenge cannot be reconciled(?) however, there is a need to address the deep necessity for the colonial relationship between the police force, justice system, and Indigenous people to be acknowledged, understood, and repaired.

Learning from the Staff and Administration Stories.

Police Legacy.

The legacy of the systemic racism and oppression afflicted onto Indigenous people was a concern that was voiced in the staff and administration interviews. Understanding the legacy of police brutality and injustices, as well as the lack of justice in the court systems, is crucial to offering and providing services and programs to the Indigenous urban community and city at large. Staff and administration identified the inherent barrier that the physical space may have on clients accessing the Hub. Because the Calgary Police Services is located within the same space as the Hub, acknowledging and understanding the inherent tension that exists will assist in developing initiatives that can assist in directly addressing the ongoing legacy.

Location / space.

Akin to the benefits of the location expressed by the clients, the staff and administration voiced their challenges in working within a space that is not able to accommodate kitchen and bathroom facilities (i.e., running water, stove, separate bathroom from CPS). Because of the nature of their programming that often includes nutrition, for example, having the access to running water and facilities that can accommodate hot food would be beneficial for both the staff and clients. Having a separate bathroom specific to the Hub was also addressed in the talking circle. Because of the CPS, Individuals need card access to utilize the bathroom which means staff have to accompany the clients to and from the bathroom. The lack of autonomy in the physical space was a barrier to the self-determination of people and as an Indigenous-led organization.

Leadership: specific role for team lead.

At the time of our interviews, the role of team lead was built into the Crime Prevention and Community Re-integration position. Staff expressed a lack of direction in their specific roles and feelings of uncertainty if they were executing their specific positions mandates and goals. Because the Hub is fairly new, with an operating time of five months, these feelings can be accredited to the challenges of mobilizing a new structure from conception to operation; although this too, can be attributed to the need for the creation of a specific team lead role that is designed to assist, support, and lead the operations of the Hub. The role of the team lead can have the capacity to oversee program development and assessment, while also understanding the dynamic and management of teams.

Staff Roles.

Currently, there are nine service areas that the Hub is operating, with each area having one coordinator responsible for the planning and execution of the entire service component. Moreover, each service area is quite broad resulting in difficulties to provide the necessary programs within the targeted area, especially for one person. Because the programs are all interconnected, with staff supporting each other when and how they are capable, the Hub has a great opportunity for relationship building and cohesion, which is already underway. As the Hub continues to grow though, to accommodate the increased needs associated with programming and the potential influx of clients, the Hub may be faced with a deficit of service providers. With increased referrals and demands for services, strain may be placed on the service areas of the Hub.

In addition, with so many roles, and the interconnected nature of the services and programs, having clearly defined roles and responsibilities is key to the success of the Hub. A challenge identified by the staff was the desire to help and assist others while not wanting to infringe on the person's autonomy and authority. Rectifying this challenge, in accompaniment to articulating clearly defined roles, involves creating consistent and clear communication structures. Frustration on part of some staff was expressed because communication lines were not created. For a healthy organization to thrive, communication is key thus establishing these structures early on are imperative.

Funding.

Funding, both fiscally and internally, were challenges that were identified with the staff. At the time of the interview, continued and consistent funding was unknown, thus causing stress for the staff. Fiscal uncertainty was a looming stress contributing to staff feeling as though they may be facing challenges in ethically forming and building trusting relationships with the clients knowing they may not be able to provide long-term services – these relationships will not be sustainable. Building trust, as identified by the staff, is crucial in creating relationships with Indigenous communities and they did not want to break the trust of the clients if funding was not continued. Staff also voiced the challenge of implementing programs and services without knowing their own program budget capacity. They identified the process of requesting funds for

specific events etc., but desired the ability have access to their own specific program budgets to assist with efficiency in planning programming.

Hours of operation.

The hours of operation posed a challenge to some staff wherein their programming was held outside of the regular business hours, “I’m finding that challenging, mostly because our center is only open from nine to four o’clock and a lot of youth aren’t walking through those doors during that time, and when they are, they are older youth” (Staff, 2019). Having hours of operation more accessible to those individuals who access the services outside of regular business or school hours is important to the success of the Hub.

Learning from the stories: Organizations / partnerships.

Colonial legacy.

The colonial legacy has deep implications in the creation and sustainment of all relationships at the Hub and must be acknowledged as a component that will impact the success of the Hub. Del Majore affirmed this notion, “The colonial legacies that include ALL of systemic genocide need to be considered” (personal communication, November 22, 2018). Racism, which is one of the core elements colonialism, can be viewed in three realms: 1) institutional racism, 2) personally mediated racism, and 3) internalized racism (Jones, 2014). Most often, institutionalized racism is the hardest to identify because it is embedded in governing structures that dictate and create policies and procedures (Jones, 2014). Then, these policies and procedures decide who receives funding, who is allowed to access services, and how people are treated when accessing services. Thus, for strong organizational relationship to be formed and maintained, the identification of institutional beliefs, values and practices that promote racism needs to occur and be eradicated.

Colonialism was referenced in all interviews that were conducted. Clients shared their stories of experiencing racism in the social services sector and interpersonally in their daily interactions in the City of Calgary. Staff shared stories of the racism and discrimination that is experienced in personal engagements in their work and within organizational structures. The traditional knowledge keeper referred to the perpetuation of colonialism through the imposition of Western knowledge systems on Oral knowledge systems, inclusive of protocols and practices. The legacy of colonialism reverberates in all areas of Indigenous people’s lifeways from the conceptualization of knowledge and governance structures to the very basic human interactions. This will be a colossal challenge for the Hub as the staff and clients have already experienced all three levels of racism (Jones, 2014). There will need to be intentional efforts to address racism for example, implementing cross-cultural training opportunities for partnering organizations and staff in order to address the racism experienced in daily interactions.

Strong Partnerships.

In order for the Hub to be successful, the organization needs strong relationships that are formed and sustained through understanding shared history, building trust, and enacting respect.

Del Majore in affirming the important role of relationships stated, “Relationships – looking at partnerships as relationships – understanding that relational perspective is key” (personal communication, November 22, 2018). Del also stated that to be in reciprocal relationships is reliant on “Participation – Building authentic relationships – understanding what it means to build, form and maintain ethical mutually beneficial partnerships” (personal communication, date). The staff identified experiences that described the ongoing colonial ideologies that permeate interactions between individuals inevitably creating tension and breaking trust. These interactions can include the exchange of racialized comments that are made in short interactions, or they can be unconscious behaviours that are enacted in group settings; all of which break down trust and dismantle authentic relationships. The challenge is that partnering organizations need to be willing and ready to have difficult conversations in order to understand the injustices that are held within these interactions. They need to be willing to understand that colonialism and racism are ongoing and are often implied in interactions and go unnoticed (Ermine, 2007). The strength of relationships is dependent upon all entities participating equally, acknowledging shared colonial history, understanding the implications history and on-going colonialism has on rupturing relationships, and commit to participate in creating and embodying solutions that will allow for the repairing of relationships to create a better future.

Tracking / Duplication of services.

The Hub will be using the HMIS to track the client service access points and service pathways. The specificities of the tracking criteria will be designed to fit the needs specific to the Hub. The tracking of clients’ service points is used as a reporting mechanism for funders, but also as a means to use quantifiable data to determine and address the needs of the Hub. Although this can be a useful tool to monitor the internal organizational activity and the external funding accountability, the clients expressed that the tracking of numbers through signing-in to services feels as a dehumanizing mechanism that renders them as a number and not a human being. Forms or paperwork can be viewed as a bureaucratic barrier to accessing services and feel like the clients are not being recognized as humans. Through the discussion with staff that are developing the HMIS system for the Hub, it was discussed that the need to capture the human elements of the Hub use are important to fully illustrate the relationships that are being formed and maintained through the Hub. Through colonial processes, Indigenous people have a history of being reduced to a number (i.e., status and treaty cards and Indian Residential School Systems) thus the challenge for the Hub is to accommodate and ensure that both processes of capturing the quantifiable snapshots of the access points, while capturing and upholding the stories that are being created and narrated through and with the Hub.

In our client circle, frustration was expressed about the duplication of services in the city and specifically, the repeated tracking that happens when clients access services at more than one organization in the city.

Larger community.

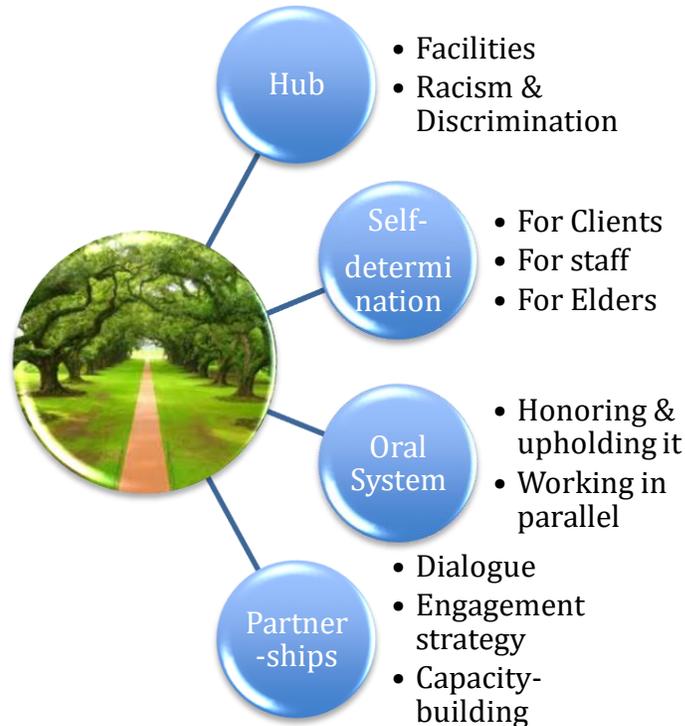
As stated above, racism, discrimination, and colonial tactics are an impediment to the success of the Hub and the overall health and wellness of Indigenous people in the city. As

articulated in the dialogue sessions and in our context included above, the larger Calgary community needs to be a safe place for Indigenous peoples to interact and engage which often it is not. As articulated by the traditional knowledge keeper, all people are responsible for establishing and maintaining ethical mutually beneficial relationships especially because of the treaty making processes that allowed all of us to share the territory that is now called Calgary. Del Majore was very specific when he stated, “it’s open-ended on what the possibilities are, but again you got [to] have the people willing to do the work to continue those relationships”. There are rich opportunities to build connections and relationships with and through the Hub, but we need to work together for the good of all.

Future pathways: Recommendations for working together for the good of all

Evaluating the services and program areas at the Hub offered an opportunity to better understand that the potential for increasing capacity in relationships, affecting change in the community, and sustaining the momentum of success involves not only addressing the challenges identified above but understanding that these challenges need to be re-framed. Thus, instead of conceptualizing them as shortcomings or barriers to success with corresponding recommendations meant to fix the problems, we illuminate pathways of potentialities that honor the interconnected stories, or themes if put another way, that emerged through our evaluation efforts. We emphasize how walking these pathways is a shared responsibility and done with the interests of the urban community in mind which means working together for the good of the whole community. We first explore the physical space of the Hub as a site for increasing the potential for enhancing relationships and ensuring it is welcoming and accessible for all. We address the notion of self determination and how this is conceptualized on a general level, and from Elder, client and staff perspectives. We then highlight pathways for building Elder capacity as determined by an Elder actively building relationships with urban organizations and finally, offer a pathway that could enhance partnership/stakeholder relationships.

Figure 3. Future Pathways/Recommendations



The Hub: Facilities.

The Hub facilities includes both the physical space and accessibility to the space at large. The challenges articulated by all individuals referred to the physical space and the lack of facilities that would allow them both the staff and clients to feel autonomous and self-determining. The sections below address both the client and staff perspectives, as there were relationships between the narratives.

Kitchen and washroom.

Through the stories we learned that having readily and consistent access to kitchen and bathroom facilities would enhance the programming and services that are offered. Currently there are no full kitchen facilities that would allow for food preparation and cooking to occur. In addition, due to the restrictions of the space being housed within the Calgary Police services, easy access to the bathroom is not permitted.

Future Pathways.

Having a facility that can include a fully functioning kitchen and accessible washrooms are needed to accommodate and support the needs of the Hub. Securing a different location would be an optimal future pathway. Having these two aspects within a location is directly linked to having the staff and clients feel as if they are in control and agents within the space. Having the capacity to feel in control and an agent in life directly leads to be self-determining as both a collective and as an individual.

Racism and Discrimination: Advocacy.

Advocacy was a point that was mentioned throughout the course of our discussions. In the talking circle with clients specifically, they identified the need to have advocates in the social services sector to reduce the barriers faced when accessing services. For example, clients have experienced being mistreated in health care facilities and receiving inadequate care because they were Indigenous. The staff revealed that they experience racism in their day-to-day interactions thus, addressing this within the inter-organizational is imperative. Racism can also be seen and felt in interactions through resistance to Indigeneity, history, and knowledge and can be experiences by all Indigenous people. This is a barrier to building meaningful mutually beneficial relationships between, individuals, communities, and organizations.

Future Pathways.

Advocacy has the potential to be a stand-alone role within the structure of the Hub, or a part of an already established role. Because institutional racism is often inherent in social services, it creates barriers to accessing care and assistance that others may not notice if they've never experienced it before. An advocacy role in the Hub organization can provide clients with assistance in navigating the often-invisible barriers, providing support at appointments if deemed appropriate, while also educating social service organizations about the legacies of colonialism and racism and discrimination. This role can be seen as an advocate for individuals, but also as an educator that is bringing awareness and cross-cultural understanding to lessen the systemic and personal mediated racism that exists in the city of Calgary.

Self-determination

In this section of our evaluation report, we emphasize how understandings around social issues that directly affect the Indigenous population must be determined from the perspective of Indigenous peoples. The voices we draw on include both staff and clients as well as an Elder perspective. Much of the policies that have been imposed on Indigenous people have been done with an underlying assumption based in colonial paternalistic posturing which assumes that leaders of social and political systems know what is best for Indigenous people. Social programming and funding structures often operate from a Euro-centered paradigm with no meaningful input from Indigenous communities. Indeed, CAUAC, in the Indigenous Policy Framework, asserted that despite the fact that Indigenous worldviews are buttressed by cultural principles and values such as honesty, compassion and kindness, which clearly reflect self-determination, Indigenous peoples living in an urban environment are seen through a needs-based lens as being vulnerable and requiring care; an attitude of paternalism that persists from colonial times (IPF, 2017). Indeed, "An overemphasis and reliance on this assumption dispossesses Indigenous peoples from opportunities to actively define who they are on their own terms" (p. 12). Moreover, Indigenous peoples are often seen through a lens of homogenization which assumes that all share the same history, beliefs, and cultural practices. This perspective dispossesses Indigenous people from asserting Indigenous knowledge that emerges from a

distinct tribal or community worldview. For example, Blackfoot nations have a distinct set of values and principles that may be similar to other First Nations such as the Anishnaabe nations, but they are different and should not be considered within a homogeneous frame of understanding. The dispossession of Indigenous self-determination occurs at the nation level and funnels to individual contexts. To be sure, the need to assert Indigenous self-determination was a recurring theme in the interviews and group conversations. Below, we highlight this sub-theme by first offering a general overview in terms of how self-determination can be conceptualized and then offer recommendations based on these understandings. We begin with the Elder perspective and then focus on staff and client perspectives.

Elder Perspective on Self Determination.

In our conversation with the Elder, we were reminded that incorporating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into existing Western systems involves understanding that Canada set out the parameters of the Treaties as we know them today with no meaningful engagement from the First Nations who signed those Treaties. Thus, our ability to be self-determining was already compromised in these nation-to-nation agreements with regards to the parameters that were set out. Today, creating meaningful partnership arrangements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples should include paralleling of knowledge systems and an understanding of how Indigenous people determine treaty and reconciliation. According to the Elder, for Indigenous peoples, reconciliation means working with members of settler-society in unison and to have our perspectives paralleled by deliberately outlining the responsibilities of Indigenous peoples as distinct from other Canadians and government responsibilities. It involves acknowledging and knowing which systems of thought we belong to and for non-Indigenous people to learn Indigenous knowledge systems and how they are different. Through shared understandings, the two knowledge systems need to come together with the acknowledgement that both systems are working in synergy towards the same end goal. There needs to be a recognition that our current Western system can be improved upon and that Indigenous systems are just as valid in documenting new knowledge, programs, policies, and protocols. The Elder further articulated that the Smudge is a way to fortify relationships and when called into the Smudging circle, we are all equal as a human nation – our differences are put aside and systems of social classification are not valid.

Future Pathways.

The Elder emphasized that the Hub can help to accommodate the dialogue around perspectives which would provide an opportunity for Indigenous stakeholders in the community to assert their goals and interests within a framework of self-determination. Strategizing and defining essential services combined with translating social systems from a Western understanding into Indigenous perspectives is a starting point towards self-determination. Additionally, articulating the role of the Hub in the community within a reciprocal and relational framework could be done through a storied approach. The Elder asserted that stories provide the blueprint that outline the purpose and importance of Indigenous protocols and maintaining balance and how our teachings are/can be translated into today's society. He offered examples of

how these stories contain our knowledge for living a good life and how they can function in the community – it is not just the urban context but also how these translate in Indigenous communities as well. Creating opportunities at the Hub where stories can be exchanged with intention is a culturally-determined way of bridging the gap in worldviews that is grounded in notions of Indigenous self-determination. This means using both oral and written systems to plan, organize, and implement programs and services at the Hub. Moreover, the Elder reminded us that there is a need for an Indigenous approach in coming up with solutions to the opiate crisis and again, a framework based on an oral system can provide an outlet for Indigenous people wanting to help.

Adding to the above, one staff interview also revealed that good leadership in Indigenous-led community organizations includes meaningful involvement of Elders. Moreover, the importance of Elder guidance was also reflected in the development of the Indigenous Policy Framework report (2017) and the Elders acted as the overall authority in determining the pathways to cultural sustainability. Indeed, CAUAC highlighted how “The City has a great opportunity to listen to and sustain respectful dialogue with Treaty 7 Traditional Knowledge Keepers” (p. 8). This quotation, again, points to an opportunity for municipal organizations to work alongside Indigenous Elders in order to dialogue about issues that matter from an Indigenous perspective. A potential pathway for the Hub to not only sustain its current success in terms of embedding Indigenous knowledge into the space, is to create opportunities to further dialogue with Elders around how both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems can come together through a parallel approach that will enable the urban Indigenous population to be self-determining.

Staff Perspectives on Self-Determination.

During our conversations with staff, there were several ways that Indigenous self-determination was contextualized. Self-determination means understanding that as an Indigenous led-organization, staff and leadership are accountable to the Indigenous community and must keep the needs of all Indigenous tribes and communities as central and not just one’s own tribal nation. However, Indigenous organizations are representative of their respective communities and if an individual or an organization is doing something wrong, members of the Indigenous community will let it be known. Notable, it is vital that staff are able to draw on cultural strengths/ceremonies to counteract the police legacy of oppression and abuse. Indigenous cultural strength is found in relationality and realized through community support mechanisms and the ability for Indigenous people to determine their own path to capacity-building and self-empowerment. It was suggested that success and health for Indigenous people are determined partly through developing and maintaining a strong and positive attachment to culture and one’s own sense of Indigenous identity but individuals must be afforded the space to learn about culture so their sense of identity as an Indigenous person can not only be fostered but maintained.

Future Pathways.

In order to foster self-determination from a staff perspective, staff need to have the ability to manage their programs and services in such a way that enables them to utilize and enhance their existing skills as well as meet the needs of the clients. Ensuring that relationships, Indigenous knowledge and cultural teachings foreground how programs at the Hub are administered is important especially with regards to the use of medicines, adherence to ceremonial protocols, and ensuring that teachings are culturally appropriate and validated. This points to the notion of “Indigenous-centredness,” which is a concept that continuously emerged in our interview with one staff and could serve as a framework for relationships which ensures that work is done alongside and with the Indigenous community. Ensuring that programs and services are structured with opportunities for reciprocity embedded in the delivery is a vital component of an Indigenous-centred service delivery format. Again, strong leadership is needed to create opportunities for the Hub to succeed and address the deeply layered issues that underlie many Indigenous organizations that include, but are not limited to funding sustainability, navigating the colonial legacy of dehumanization and Indigenous erasure, and the reality of lateral violence that manifests when Indigenous people who are influenced by the Western system begin using that system’s knowledge against other Indigenous peoples. Effective ways to counteract these negative factors must emerge from the community. From our perspective, it makes little sense to attempt to address these issues from the same system of thought that caused these problems to begin with, which is representative of Western approaches. Moreover, as the Hub continues to grow, there may be a need to increase staff given that the scopes of the existing programs are quite broad. One possibility may be to split the program entities into smaller entities to provide more focused programming and services so staff are better able to feel empowered and capable in their roles.

Client Perspectives on Self Determination.

Our talking circle with clients clearly revealed a strong desire to be self-determining in their choices, how they define their identities and the overall trajectory of their lives. Many had a solid understanding of the barriers that might prevent them from moving forward in their lives, were aware of what direction their lives should take, what they need, the reasons for the current situation and importance of having a connection to their culture. For one client, he knew that it was his addictions that kept him in a cycle of homelessness. Others shared how they struggled with anxiety and trauma. Regarding trauma in the lives of clients, one staff participant shared, “So, it’s ... realizing that and seeing the cycles that go along with that, particularly in the addictions.” Moreover, the clients wanted to have their stories validated, that their suffering in the systems mattered, that society cares. Many are survivors of the Indian Residential Schools and Sixties scoop era and have negative experiences with the child welfare, health, justice and other social systems. Yet, in our conversations with clients these stories of systemic and social oppression were not the only narratives they focused on. Despite these negative experiences, many spoke of hope and how culture and ceremony provide those connections. Asserting an

autonomous right to practice culture and access cultural teachings was a common thread throughout our conversations with clients.

For another, he voiced how the challenges associated with living in a social context of oppression in which systemic racism has proven to be a persistent and overbearing factor which has affected the health and wellbeing of his entire family. He further shared how he challenged this oppression and racism in the health care system and continues to assert his identity within a framework of the sovereignty of First Nations. Additionally, the client spoke about how confronting and challenging systemic racism and discrimination also involved advocating for one another when they see other Indigenous peoples being treated poorly – asserting the intrinsic right to justice and fairness within a collective consciousness.

Future Pathways.

When planning future programs and services for clients, it is important to note that not all clients are struggling with addictions. Trauma, however is a pervasive factor in their lives. Thus, it remains vital to understand trauma as a legacy of colonization in order to better strategize supports for individuals within Indigenous-led institutions. This is not only at the staff level but also for clients. Many of them need to better understand the complex and deeply layered impacts that trauma has on the psychological, spiritual, physiological and neurological systems and how it is connected to addictions, homelessness, identity loss, poor mental health and violence. Just as importantly to being trauma informed in the context of Indigenous experiences, is offering programming that explores why trauma is such a pervasive factor in the clients' lives and directly connecting this to colonization. Not only does this type of anti-colonial and anti-oppressive learning offer clients another, more critical, way of thinking about their own challenges, it also can enable them to feel a sense of empowerment and increased autonomy over their lives in that they can determine their path. Oftentimes, trauma can leave individuals with a sense of helplessness with little hope that they can change their lives. Indeed, many blame themselves for their situations and members of mainstream society are also quick to place blame on the dispossessed and those experiencing the negative outcomes of trauma. Anti-colonial and anti-oppressive education can help to mitigate these negative impacts.

In the City of Calgary's research brief on Aboriginal peoples (FCSS, 2014), it was recommended that an approach to prevention in program development should also include defining culturally appropriate indicators of success (as opposed to outcomes-based indicators commonly used in Western program evaluation methodologies), addressing root causes such as intergenerational traumas, incorporating research-based approaches and employing traditional stances on healing as the conceptual lens for program development. In terms of research-based approaches, we recommend using Indigenous research-based methodologies that not only respond to the needs of Indigenous clients and outline direct benefits to the Indigenous urban community but are in and of themselves grounded in notions of self-determination. Notable, the promising healing practices outlined in the research brief (FCSS, 2014) are also useful in providing a framework for program implementation that is both community-defined and

grounded in the research from an Indigenous perspective. These practices included elements that encompassed healing from an Indigenous worldview, enabled participants to feel both culturally and personally safe and were guided by competent healing practitioners who were experienced and respected in the Indigenous communities they served. Specific approaches taken included legacy education, or providing information, awareness around the impacts of trauma and residential schools, cultural healing practices such as sweats, ceremonies and therapeutic interventions including counselling and other Western-based programming. Encouragingly, our evaluation efforts found that many of these practices are currently being implemented at the Hub, but a greater focus on legacy education and critical anti-colonial and anti-oppression program models would strengthen the overall program offerings.

The notion of self-determination within an Indigenous context is also intertwined with freedom of choice. Our talking circle with clients revealed that many simply want to access the Hub to relax. One client remarked that “it’s nice and quiet in here, relaxing on the couches. Just sit down and that kind of thing. It’s good to have something like that where they’re not constantly asking you like, ‘What are you doing, your time’s up,’ kinda thing, you have to leave. There’s no pushiness here or anything.” For the sake of maintaining the autonomy of individual clients, it is vital to ensure that clients have choice in terms of *how* they are accessing the Hub and not feeling pressured to engage in activities or be “serviced.” Perhaps creating a drop-in program where clients can simply have quiet time might assist in mitigating the pressures associated with feeling the need to deliver a service or minimize the assumptions that clients only access the Hub because they are requiring a particular service. Freedom of choice is a key component in self-determination.

Honouring and Upholding Oral institutions.

The traditional knowledge keeper that we spoke with discussed the deep importance of hosting ceremonies and oral methods of practicing cultural lifeways in order to allow Indigenous organizations and individuals to live well in the city. Elders are needed and are in high demand to provide teachings and perform oral practices for various organizations however, because there is such an increasing need to have access to Elders, especially since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, organizations need to acknowledge, be responsible and commit to assisting the Elders build capacity. Building capacity includes resources, but it also involves human and knowledge capacity. This entails providing the funds and resources (i.e., venues and/or monetary compensation) to allow elders to gather together to facilitate ceremonies and oral processes, but to also create an environment wherein opportunities are being created for younger elders to be transferred skills and knowledge for the future. The Elder discussed the importance of seeing elders as part of larger institutions, wherein they are one part of the larger oral institution. For example, when elders conduct ceremonies, they are an integral part however, there are many parts to facilitating a ceremony – drummers, smudge maker, tobacco cutters, cooks, and helpers, to name a few, thus resources and costs need to be associated with the whole oral system, not just one individual. As the elder articulated, “sometimes they’ll give you, they’ll give me \$800 or

\$1200. Then I take it and I give that tobacco cutter, say \$100. Then I give each of the drummers \$150, you know. That's about five or six hundred. And then I pay for the food, you know. So all my costs go back into the institution"; when considering ceremony and oral practices, organizations need to acknowledge that they are paying for a whole knowledge system. Resources, whether it be monetary, venue, or human need to be acknowledged and protected as an integral part of Indigenous organizations.

Future Pathways.

Providing ceremonies and oral practices to clients, staff, and organizational partners are imperative to the success of the Hub. The Hub is already hosting ceremonies for their clients, so we want to praise these initiatives while encouraging the Hub to consider how the organization can build oral practices and methods into their structure through the creation of policies and funding. Challenges can arise when finance budgets or policies do not allow for oral practices to occur (i.e., not allowing smudge in buildings, not allocating enough funds to pay for all aspects of ceremony) therefore, building these expenses into fiscal budgets is key, but more importantly embedding these aspects of oral practices into written policies will allow for the protection of oral systems.

Of great importance, a future pathway for the Hub is to be a leader in creating spaces and resources for elders to gather and build their knowledge and human capacity to become stronger in their cultural ways. We are only as strong as our elders; thus, it is a crucial directive of the Hub to support and enable the elders to build their *own* capacity on an on-going and sustainable manner.

Working in parallel with Western Systems.

As previously identified, one staff member at the Hub stated, "the real backbone of our program [is] the spiritual aspect of it". This is an important statement to keep at the forefront of the further development of the Hub because the spiritual components that are inherent in Indigenous oral systems need to be paralleled along with Western institutions in order for it to be successful. The original instructions for developing paralleling systems were embedded in the Treaty making processes wherein each system, Indigenous and Western, practiced their own cultural ways in order to come to a decision for their communities. However, the wrongdoing resulted from having the written system of validation and authority imposed on Indigenous oral systems and interpretation purely through Western legal terms. In the original processes of Treaty, we need to parallel both written and oral systems in our organizations so that both can be validated as authorities. The Elder spoke of paralleling in this way, "I'm using my transferred rights and my language and my natural laws and my understanding of Indigenous knowledge capacity to come to reconciliation table to say, 'here are some parallels.' I'm not coming at it from a governments legislation to say, 'okay here's the TRC and here are recommendations.' I'm not coming to it from there. I'm coming to it from the other side". This speaks to the understanding that there needs to be an accommodation of both oral and written systems in all aspects of the organization.

Future Pathways.

Paralleling both institutions, oral and written practices, are important to the success of the Hub. Paralleling both systems includes acknowledging and upholding the validity of both systems as authorities in knowledge generation, decision making, governance, and validation. Often, we adhere to written policies and procedures as the sole authorities to determine the direction and operation of organizations but using parallel processes to guide the Hub with strengthen the programs and services. This may include using the smudge or pipe to validate decisions in the organization or using oral practices such as the tea dance to facilitate discussions. These processes will depend on the elders that the organization seeks out to support the Hubs efforts in paralleling. Supporting the Elders in their own capacity building processes will automatically contribute to the ability to parallel systems at the Hub.

Partnership and Organizations.

This section provides a brief overview of the potential pathways to enhance the Hub's current partnership framework and build on successes. Understanding the potential for enhancing and increasing partnership collaborations is vital given that the Hub operates within an interconnected web of relationship. Although non-Indigenous organizations do not have a good history of collaboration with the Indigenous community and have a long-established pattern that includes a lack of meaningful consultation with Indigenous-led agencies, a pattern that is still being repeated, there are promising relationship opportunities that must also be kept at the forefront in order to center the idea of potential and hope for change. Indeed, one of the key issues brought up in the interview with an Indigenous member from a partner organization was a deep frustration with non-Indigenous agencies and organizations that speak about having partnerships with Indigenous agencies when in fact they do not. This indicates a larger disconnect suggesting that there is little understanding in the non-Indigenous community about what meaningful and transparent partnerships and collaboration means. Hence, partners and collaborators need a better understanding of what meaningful partnership arrangements looks like from an Indigenous perspective and strategize how a path forward can be paved that incorporates both perspectives with balance and respect.

Future Pathways.

In one of our interviews, it was revealed that there has been interest on the part of Indigenous serving and Indigenous led agencies in building the Hub but there has been a lack of real commitment towards acting on this interest. Lack of Indigenous partnership engagement may have to do with funding as well as mistrust of the police legacy given the Hub's physical space. In order to leverage this interest, planning should be prioritized in order to identify both the opportunities and barriers. A series of talking circles hosted by AFCC and the Hub leadership geared towards engaging Indigenous partners could be a starting point in increasing overall partners. Separate partnership engagement talking circles with other non-Indigenous organizations and agencies could also be planned for but these talks should be centred around the strength of Indigenous cultures and the inherent right to determine their own program pathways.

Further, it was mentioned during the interview with one of the partner staff members that talk of creating a “Crossroads Centre” which is a partnership between the Calgary Homeless Foundation, the SoRCE, and AFCC (the Hub) was once on the table. Expanding on this vision of collaboration would not only strengthen existing partnerships but offer opportunity for the Hub to be part of a larger urban initiative that would certainly build its capacity.

Moreover, with the Hub being newly established, capacity building in all aspects of relationships is a process that is still being initiated between the staff, clients and other agencies and organizations. Currently, it is critical that AFCC and Hub leadership consider how these relationship building components can be meaningfully integrated as a common practice. Additionally, a future pathway should be paved that incorporates ceremony and Elder knowledge into partnership and relationship building processes. This would not only help the Elders to build their capacity and in turn build the capacity of the Hub and overall urban Indigenous community but it would also contribute to increasing cross-cultural understandings and reduce misunderstanding in non-Indigenous partnership arrangements. During our talking circle with the staff, some mentioned how establishing a network of health professionals who would go to the Hub and offer services such as health and dental to clients is something that is being explored. Further inquiry into the feasibility of this concept is warranted and would help to mitigate the amount of racism and discrimination that clients experience when accessing healthcare services. Additionally, our evaluation efforts revealed a tremendous potential for the cultural program to expand and grow through partnerships and it has already received good feedback from the clients and community. The staff forecasted an increase in clients accessing the programs so a more robust program development is needed that draws on a web of interconnected partners. The justice program coordinator identified how they would like to start doing outreach to the prisons to prepare Indigenous offenders for reintegration in the community. This requires the establishment of new partners in the corrections systems. Developing a robust and detailed partnership engagement strategy for the Hub would assist in offering a clear path forward and concrete goals that the Hub could begin working toward. Although the current Hub partnerships are strong, the above recommendations offer a path forward that would not only serve to mitigate the challenges to partnership engagement and ensure that the Hub and all stakeholders and partners are working together for the good of all.

Conclusion: Understanding the Relationships

When attempting to conduct program evaluations, especially in regard to Indigenous-led initiatives, the methodologies and methods used in assessment efforts are defined within a Western cultural frame of reference which is insufficient in authentically identifying how program success is connected to an Indigenous cultural ethos. Increasingly, Indigenous researchers working both in community and academia are pushing back on standardized evaluation markers emerging from a Western cultural worldview to instead chart a research path that honors the distinct and heterogenous tribal and community collective perspectives that

comprise Indigenous peoples. To be sure, standardized methods and approaches neither enable self-determination nor do they make room for other ways of knowing. This evaluation report is representative of a rigorous methodology emerging from an Indigenous research paradigm that employed a spectrum of research methods ranging from literature analysis, statistical analysis utilizing the data drawn from the Hub usage tracking, individual informal interviews, talking circles and reflexive practice. By any standard, Western or otherwise, these methods have proven to be a rigorous and reliable way for understanding the many gifts the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub has given to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the City of Calgary, the learnings associated with these gifts and the future pathways for ensuring that the full potential of the Hub is realized. The Indigenous methodology we employed, a relational and storied framework for developing the methods, coding and interpreting the data and presenting the findings ensured that the primary goal of research from an Indigenous paradigm was achieved: that the research be of overall benefit to the Indigenous community. Below, we briefly highlight both the interconnectedness of the report's sections and expand on the tension between tracking numbers and building meaningful human-to-human relationships.

Seeing the whole to understand the parts: Emphasizing interconnectedness.

Indigenous scholar Vine Deloria Jr. (1999) offers an apt starting point for considering how the various sections of this report are related. In stating quite simply that “we are all related,” Deloria establishes how, for Indigenous people, we observe the world around us through the lens of relationships in order to obtain knowledge. Other, more local Indigenous scholars such as Betty Bastien (2004) state that Indigenous epistemology is a relational one and grounded in direct experience in relation to self, others and the natural world. Informed by an Indigenous philosophical stance, we worked to ensure that our efforts were in alignment with this relational epistemology which offered us a way to better understand how all aspects of the Hub's programs and services, physical space, administrative structure and people were all interconnected in a network of relationships. The major sections of the report were deliberately re-framed as a way to honor these distinct relationships. For example, the gifts, or put another way, impact, of the Hub is reciprocally connected to the lessons learned, or challenges, and these learnings are connected to potential pathways for building on success. In order to fully appreciate the hope that comes with these gifts, there must be a commitment to not only learn from those gifts but act on them and in doing so, reciprocity is embedded into the relationships. Importantly, potential is also connected to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings in that the Hub has the potential, indeed is already establishing itself, as a site of reconciliation and cross-cultural relationship building. We call the reader's attention back to the City of Calgary's Indigenous Policy Framework document (IPF, 2017) which provides a vision of sustainability buttressed by the TRC's Calls to Action: “Reconciliation is not a moment; it is a sustained and active process” (p. 41) requiring sustained commitment. If, for example, the program coordinators are overly concerned or anxious about funding and whether they will have a job at the Hub beyond the Spring of 2019, then clearly there is a disconnect between funding priorities

and support and collaboration with urban Indigenous peoples in creating a sustainable pathway towards reconciliation.

**Capturing the essence of building meaningful human-to-human relationships:
Humanizing the tracking system.**

A pathway to reconciliation needs to address the imposition of Western systems of management and governance on Indigenous lifeways and instead, strive to parallel Western and Indigenous institutions. As articulated in our impact section, defining impact comes from seeing, hearing, and feeling that people are living a good life because of healthy ethical reciprocal relationships which, in the context of the Hub, are fostered through programs and services that are centred within relationality. Often, defining impact is sought through service deliverables that are quantifiable – how many clients served. We understand this to be of importance and useful when planning and implementing however, seeing impact only through quantitative data can be harmful. Paralleling systems and using methods that support Indigenous paradigms can address the current tensions of tracking clients. The clients expressed that collecting information can often feel dehumanizing as they are treated like a number and thus potentially contributing to the accessing of services. Capturing impact can be achieved through embodying a relational praxis wherein narratives are used to tell the nuanced stories of *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p*. Telling and listening to stories is an integral part of Indigenous oral systems thus, tracking can be achieved through an oral method of storytelling that captures the success of the Hub in reports and evaluations through the personal stories of all who are impacted.

Although this report has highlighted some of the achievements, strengths and gifts as well as the learning potential offered by the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub, it is important to note that at the time of this writing, the Hub is embarking on evolutionary growth and expanding current programs. As with many Friendships Centers in Canada, the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub is responding to the unique needs of the urban Indigenous population. For example, the cultural program is growing in response to the needs of the Indigenous population who clearly want a safe space to connect with Indigenous culture. The opiate response housed under the umbrella of the health program and delivered by the community navigator is also expanding its services to provide much needed support in the wake of the current opioid crisis. Indeed, many more opportunities are on the horizon and it is clear that the work of the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub is just beginning. In closing, we thank the reader for taking the time to peruse this report and hope that it acts as a mechanism for ensuring that the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub continues to offer future stories and experiences to learn from.

Phase Two *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub Evaluation

Introduction

“Patience is key to deal with any situation.”

(Steven, former Hub client and current staff member)

“This place is a true blessing.”

(Lucille, community member and volunteer)

“It’s incredible how they move the clients between the systems and how they’re all able to help them.”

(Staff Sergeant Frank Cattoni, Executive Director, SORCe)

This component of the report encompasses the results of follow-up consultations to the initial evaluation (Lindstrom & Bouvier, 2019) undertaken in winter of 2019 of the *iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p* Indigenous Hub program areas (also referred herein as “the Hub”). The report offered general yet comprehensive background information which served to highlight the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the urban landscape, contextualize the Friendship Centre movement in Canada, effectively situate the Hub within the City of Calgary, and advance an understanding of the impact of the Hub in relation to the values of the urban Indigenous community. In addition to this overview, the report encapsulated a detailed description of the Hub’s impact on the community, challenges as well as areas for future development. As identified in the previous evaluation, “the impact of the Hub services is most felt when the processes involved in building and maintaining ethical mutually beneficial relationships, creating a sense of belonging and community, and fostering the mind/body/emotion/spiritual dimensions are acknowledged and supported” (Lindstrom & Bouvier, 2019, p. 12). Moreover, impact was also defined through reciprocal exchanges which were conceptualized as being embedded within the fabric of the Hub programs.

In this present report and informed by a distinct, values-based understanding of impact, we provide an analysis of our consultation efforts with Hub leadership and staff, stakeholders, Elders, and community members’ perspectives. Because the first evaluation report offered such a rich context, we will not replicate that information here and instead invite the reader to refer back to that document whilst describing the ways that the Hub continues to impact the urban Indigenous community. The methodological approach for the current evaluation was guided by

an Indigenous methodology as described in last year's report. As with any quality assessment procedure, the iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p Indigenous Hub evaluation is process oriented and involves an updated glimpse into current operations. An additional contextual layer is one encapsulated within an Indigenous cultural ethos which orients operations and program coordination from a distinct relational paradigm which is in keeping with the first evaluation. As such, we adopt similar language and terminology used previously in order to center the importance of relationality within Indigenous perspectives. For example, the reader will note that we use the term "gift" to describe the positive impact the Hub continues to have in the Indigenous community and refer to challenges not as barriers but rather, as opportunities for learning.

Much has changed since that time and as the first evaluation report highlighted, the iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p Indigenous Hub has indeed undergone evolutionary growth in terms of program expansion and the relocation of the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary (AFCC) to the Hub site. Despite these changes, a theme that remained constant was reciprocity. With the above in mind, we will first outline how the AFCC's move to the Hub locale has affected the organizational dynamics with a focus on some of the gifts this move has brought as well as the learnings that are offered as program areas address some common challenges that come with change. We provide an analysis of the data that reflects Hub usage and what these numbers signify in terms of program planning and funding allocations. We offer nuanced insights into Calgary City Police's presence as a stakeholder involved in the planning of the Crossroads Center in order to highlight how the evolution of the iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p Indigenous Hub is truly a collective effort. We then move to describe both the pathways that staff and leadership have taken up to address some of the recommendations that were offered in the previous evaluation. We also highlight the enduring gifts that the Hub offers to the Indigenous community. Finally, we conclude the report with a future-oriented vision and outline key priority areas for growth and development that emerged from our consultations.

New horizons: Movement of AFCC to Hub location

With the relocation of the AFCC to the downtown Hub site there has been a number of anticipated changes due to the combining of two sites into one. Overall, staff indicated that this change had a number of positive aspects, such as greater ease in communication, interpersonal

cohesion, and feelings of greater safety and support. Another aspect associated with the movement of staff into one location were the opportunities for colleagues and supervisors now in close proximity availing learning opportunities and a greater sense of security. Additionally, as discussed in the previous report, the Hub’s central location downtown continues to make it highly accessible to the urban Indigenous population.

While many positive aspects of occupying a unified space were identified, there are also accompanying challenges specific to the downtown space surrounding the Hub that community members must pass through in order to access programming: Some community members do not feel comfortable going downtown in the evening purportedly due to safety or because doing so creates risks to clients’ sobriety. Similarly, parents with little ones attending programming downtown risk their children being exposed to people or situations beyond their years due to the higher incidence of violence and public intoxication in the area.

Community Usage: The Story of the numbers

As anticipated in the previous report, the Hub has experienced a staggering increase in usage. Table 1 offers a comparison of Hub usage regarding the same approximate timeframe only one year later and starkly reflects increases in almost all areas:

Table 1

Dates	July 2018- February 28, 2019	Dates	July 2019- February 27, 2020
Total # of clients served	4550	Total # of clients served	9332
Program Area	Number served	Program Area	Number served
Addictions referrals/support	36	Addiction support	398
Health	239	Mental Health	546

Justice	61	Justice	163
Housing	96	Housing	365
Employment	204	Employment	76
Culture	390	Culture	690
Coffee, snacks, food	2700	Coffee, snacks, food	3180
Miscellaneous (computers, space)	358	Miscellaneous (phone, computer, space)	4593

These numbers suggest that the Hub has indeed become a meaningful part of many people’s lives and for many, accessed frequently. Additionally, the vast majority of community members visit and stay to access multiple services, something that is only possible when there are trusting and good relationships. This speaks to the Hub as a meaningful place of safety, connection, and support. Rare opportunities for community members to engage in relationships such as these are imperative given the complexity of challenges many community members are faced with. As the numbers suggest, support with the justice system has almost tripled; access to addictions support has increased more than ten-fold; and access to mental health supports have more than doubled. It is also evident that more community members are accessing cultural supports, which tells a story of people who are moving towards healing and wellness through connection to their identity and culture.

Further, the above data tells a story of the Hub’s dramatic impact on supporting community members with access to basic needs. For example, access to housing support shows an almost four-fold increase in usage, and there is a dramatic increase in access to food and miscellaneous necessities. It is likely that with future social and economic uncertainty, that the Hub will continue to experience an increase in usage that will likely be even greater than the year past.

Collective Visioning of the Crossroads Center

The work of leadership within the Calgary Police Service (CPS) ranks was vital in establishing the Crossroads co-located center which the Hub/AFCC are part of. Our consultation with Staff Sergeant Frank Cattoni provided significant insight into the shift of CPS from a culture of enforcement towards one in which members working at the Crossroads center sought to understand the underlying factors that drive homelessness. Staff Sergeant Cattoni explained why the police tactic of “heavily enforcing” the homeless population did not work (i.e. giving out tickets was ineffective as a deterrent). Additionally, there was a monetary cost to enforcement which resulted in the homeless population having increased contact with the justice system. These realities led to a transition in community based thinking that considered mental health, addictions, and trauma as antecedents to homelessness. Learning about the impact of trauma and early childhood experiences as well as mental illness became part of Staff Sergeant Cattoni’s role as a senior administrator. In 2009, the Crossroads planning team decided to develop a different approach, where CPS and Alberta Health Services could come together in way that moved from being “agency centric” to being client centered. In 2019 the SORCe was created as a collaborative of 14 agencies with a police presence. There were operational difficulties with sharing, as well as collocating and collaborating. The dearth of clients prompted many agencies to leave the Crossroads center.

As a result, there was a necessary reframing of how service providers could effectively work together based on interviews and recommendations for change. This was followed by a transition to “walk-in” service provision. Staff from stakeholder agencies came to be seen as “subject matter experts” who had buy-in and could advocate for their own agencies. Additionally, the SORCe developed a relationship with the Fair Entry low-income access program and set up a dual diagnosis clinic with mental health and addiction services. The agency brought in Indigenous mental health experts and recognized the need to bring in Elders. They also needed space to meet. As such, they collaborated with the CEO of the AFCC and developed a partnership where SORCe and AFCC could not only share the same clients, but also ensure that culturally sensitive services were being delivered. Shane Gauthier founded the iitaohkanitsini’kotsiiyio’p Indigenous Hub utilizing the findings from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report as the foundation for the Hub and aimed to connect the clients

to resources through the AFCC and the SORCe. This led to a new model of “system integration” and the act of reconciliation by giving space to the iitaohkanitsini’kotsiiyio’p Indigenous Hub.

Challenges within the Collocated Milieu

In speaking with Staff Sergeant Cattoni, we learned that there is no template for what agencies such as the Hub/AFCC are doing at the Crossroads center because nobody else is doing it. The various agencies that have formed the co-located center are setting the best practice standards. Staff Sgt. Cattoni shared that groups of interested people have come from all over the globe because people want to learn more about the Crossroads model which is fast becoming the model people are looking for in terms of how systems integration work is developed amongst the various partners. However, co-location doesn’t always mean cooperation and the systems integration approach brings operations to a more challenging level. Bureaucracy within the larger partnering organizations such as AHS is always a challenge. Despite the challenges, each agency brings their own value to the Crossroads center which is incredibly important. The Crossroads center is so unique and something that must be protected.

Journeying along the pathways

In this section, we pick up from the first evaluation report and illustrate how the Hub has taken up the recommendations that were contained therein. Last year we advanced a series of recommendations, or future pathways, to highlight the ongoing potential of the Indigenous Hub as a space for building on its well-established practices of nurturing good relationships. These pathways included recommendations that addressed challenges related to the physical space, the colonial legacy in relation to police presence and racism, understanding the role of Indigenous self-determination, working towards paralleling oral Indigenous and Western systems and increasing partnership and stakeholders’ engagement. In the earlier evaluation report, we emphasized that instead of conceptualizing these recommendations as a response to shortcomings, we deliberately re-framed them as future pathways in order to honor the relationally oriented perspectives that inform the program areas within the Hub services under the auspices of the AFCC. We carry our current discussion forward in that same vein. Ultimately, the aim of revisiting these pathways is to journey full-circle in order to provide a clearer vision for what the future holds for the Hub and the Indigenous community. We begin by

outlining how the physical space of the downtown is evolving to meet the needs of the community. We describe how the colonial legacy is being challenged and redressed in relation to police presence, racism and advocacy. We then highlight how Indigenous self-determination is being translated and mobilized within the AFCC and Hub program areas and relationships. We conclude with an update on community partnerships and stakeholders' engagement.

Physical Space

While the integration of two physical locations into one arguably takes time, staff and leadership have been deeply committed to shaping the space so that it best accommodates needs at the Hub. For example, now that the space has been guaranteed until 2024, there are plans to expand the kitchen area, including adding a sink, which would better accommodate programming requiring access to running water and hot meal preparation. As indicated in the previous report, bathrooms continue to be shared with CPS, and individuals still need card access to utilize the bathroom which means staff have to accompany the clients to and from the bathroom.

As indicated above, with an increase in programming at the Hub there are specific challenges associated with the facilities, in terms of more space being required throughout. For example, programs that had more room at the former AFCC location must now fit into a smaller and less child-friendly space. Overall, while the physical space continues to evolve, there is general agreement that more space would be beneficial, particularly in terms of practical requirements such as bigger classrooms which could accommodate an increased number of program participants.

Redressing the colonial legacy

The Hub continues to build towards being a staple in the downtown core where community members access services and connect with culture in a safe and welcoming environment. As suggested in the prior evaluation, as Indigenous relational protocols are being followed support for, and access to, the Hub continues to grow resulting in strong client engagement. Staff, partners, and community members continue to promote cultural and relational learning, which positively impacts the larger community through sharing knowledge, which fosters decolonization.

Police Presence

While the prior evaluation outlined concerns brought forth by staff and administration regarding the legacy of the systemic racism and oppression afflicted onto Indigenous people by police and the justice system, and the potential for the physical space to deter clients from accessing the Hub, this does not appear to be the case. Through the continued actions and collaboration of Hub staff, leadership, and Calgary Police Services, there have been numerous positive changes in the development of initiatives that assist CPS in redressing the colonial relationship between the police force, justice system, and Indigenous people. For example, staff and leadership spoke highly regarding the addition of a new diversity constable at the Hub who is present one day a week and alternates days in and out of uniform. Community members then have an opportunity to form a relationship with the constable, which decreases fear of police in the community, and ultimately offers a positive, and arguably reparative, experience of police who understand and respect the needs of community members. Leadership identified the constable as “amazing in terms of building relationships”, which is centrally important to redressing the colonial legacy. As a non investigative officer, the constable is in a unique position to build bridges between the community and CPS, which benefits both parties: The police are able to make connections between people in community and detectives to assist in addressing crime, and the community has a constable who mitigates fear, problem solves with individuals facing challenges in the justice system, and can follow up on police complaints. Further, this position allows the constable to actively engage in the community in various ways, “whether it be attending community events, going to a sweat, or support in planning a protest to ensure safety” (Interview, Diversity Constable). Other staff spoke to the positive impact police at the Hub are having, describing them as “some of the greatest humans that they know.” The change in interactions with the police inside the Hub is reportedly due to the respectful and non-violent interactions that the community members have come to expect. One staff indicated, “people prefer to come here to turn selves in now because there is trust in (the constable) because he is not violent.” Another notable change in the past year is an apparent increased comfort on the part of clients with the police presence, which is evidenced by the fact and are no longer leaving as soon as they see the police, and many take the time to speak with the constables and share their stories.

Further, the CPS continues to demonstrate respect towards the Indigenous community through incorporating ceremony and recognizing the spiritual aspects of partnerships. The diversity constable spoke about the intentional incorporation of Indigenous culture, including art and tradition, into the CPS recruit graduation. Such practices are aimed at reconciliation and aspire to foster change, which is slowly happening and evidenced by the voluntary and “transformative” learning that many CPS staff voluntarily engage in. An Indigenous member of the CPS also stated that when the Hub first opened, the Indigenous community members used to want to only speak to him but now they are feeling safe enough to deal with the other police officers. The CPS is working closely to build relationships and assure the Indigenous community members that they are there to help them. In the words of the Constable, “We don’t want them to fear us. Since day one, I talked with an Elder back home and he gave me advice to treat everyone like you would treat your Elder.” His words resonate with the commitment that CPS is making to redress the legacy by ensuring the police presence is safe.

Advocacy: Addressing Racism and Discrimination

The previous consultation revealed encounters with racism and discrimination as a common theme and given the colonial legacy in Canada, certainly not surprising. We invited staff and leadership to share how they felt how the relationship has improved between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. Although racism, as a systemic and structural determinant of relationships with deeply rooted historical antecedents, is still very much a factor at the Hub, its presence is being confronted through staff advocacy. There are staff members who are not afraid to correct behaviour if they see it and will educate non-Indigenous peoples with the full support of Hub leadership. Also, some of the Hub staff offered Indigenous awareness training with facilities security and non-Indigenous staff did sensitivity training. The Hub staff are building their own capacity to withstand racial violence and often asked how they can support non-Indigenous peoples which in turn minimizes triggers for racial conflicts to occur.

Indigenous Awareness and Competencies

Additional consultations with senior members of the CPS highlighted how the Hub staff and leadership were vital resources in building cultural competencies and capacity within the CPS. Staff Sgt. Cattoni shared that when the pipe and naming ceremony took place, he felt so blessed that AFCC had decided to do this work. The partnering agencies had to learn the Indigenous protocol and that has been a big learning curve for all non-Indigenous peoples.

AFCC leadership have been asked to provide teachings around the Indigenous protocols to non-Indigenous service workers. There are many opportunities for continuous learning and navigating the relationships. Elders will smudge the lobby and it calms everybody down – even the non-Indigenous peoples. It soothes everyone during the food hamper days. Over half of the group are indigenous and it changes the whole dynamics of the space. Another CPS Sergeant shared how he knew that building relationships with Indigenous community members would be difficult and the uniform would be a barrier. However, the amount of intergenerational trauma that community members experience was beyond what he expected and it took 6-7 months to build trust with people so they felt comfortable enough for them to approach him about their warrants. Understanding the complexities of how colonial history and everyday trauma impacts Indigenous peoples was a huge learning curve for him.

The Indigenous program coordinators from the Hub/AFCC have been invaluable educational resources. He's learned so much staff and the knowledge they've given him has better enabled him to approach community members as well as gain deepened insights into the context of alcohol and drug abuse. The guidance of Indigenous staff has been invaluable. The Sergeant shared how he has had indigenous women see him about legal advice and he able to help her when she was at her lowest. He was able to show her where the smudge was and is confident to ask Elders for support. He realizes the importance of Elders' roles. The work of CPS is certainly building Elder capacity as well and like Staff Sergeant Cattoni, he regularly witnesses how the energy in the front waiting area is changed when Elders come out to smudge. All people regardless of ethnicity respond to the smudge. Elders also see him smudge and he appreciates being able to participate in the spiritual aspects of the Hub. Moreover, where the Sergeant was used to dealing with it from a police perspective, he feels the Hub/AFCC staff have helped him work towards a paradigm shift and he is now trying to use a trauma informed approach.

Reconciliation

Given that the TRC serves as the foundation of the Hub, our consultations revealed how the CPS is leveraging its relationships with the Hub/AFCC in moving towards reconciliation with urban Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation efforts were evident in the ways CPS staff adapted their approach with Indigenous community members. The Crossroads is the last stop on the line for many people so the last thing CPS wanted to do was start banning people. Instead,

agencies made a collaborative effort to determine how they could approach things differently and make community members part of the solutions. Physically escorting people from Crossroads meant de-escalation and ensuring they can back the next day or at a set period of time. The CPS focus on the behavior and not the individual. When they come back, familiar CPS staff are there to greet and welcome them back. This approach in keeping with restorative justice which is a thread that runs through everything they do at the Crossroads center. The community is everybody's responsibility. The beauty of Crossroads is we're bringing everyone together. All kinds of people have been helped at Crossroads and have been helped by AFCC. Using a restorative justice approach has been phenomenal. The Indigenous court has been a big part of helping people put their lives back together. Offered examples of reciprocity using a restorative justice lens. Helping people get over their fear of the justice system.

One CPS Sergeant shared how normal policing duties are about seeing a person in crisis and dealing with it then moving on. In this role, he is continuously building relationships with the same clients. He see them in crisis and when they're doing better. He is able to see the person he's helped when they're at their lowest and then when they're seeing better times. He further shared that "You can't solve a problem with the same kind of thinking that started it!" He felt that the biggest problem with policing today is that as a system, it has allowed its members to become separate from the community. However, the community is everybody's responsibility. The beauty of Crossroads is that the agencies are bringing everyone together. All kinds of people have been helped at Crossroads and have been helped by AFCC. Using a restorative justice approach has been phenomenal and the Indigenous court has been a big part of helping people put their lives back together and get over their fear of the justice system.

The Sergeant's experiences in working with Indigenous community members and AFCC staff have led him to believe the way forward for policing is through reconciliation. For him, there is nothing more rewarding. He shared how a community member approached him and said, "I'm going to go to a sacred space and say some sacred words and set part of this meal aside for you because you treat us with respect and we appreciate all you do." For a person who has very little yet has taken the time to say that to him, in full uniform, that empowers him to continue building relationships and learning from the Indigenous community. In his words, "It's things like that that empower me to keep going."

Indigenous Self-determination

In the initial Hub evaluation report, the role of self-determination was identified as a future pathway. Specifically, we further advanced an enduring understanding that solutions to the issues that arise in the Indigenous urban community must be defined by the community. Indigenous self-determination in defining both problems and solutions counteracts the colonial legacy of paternalism. We argued that “Much of the policies that have been imposed on Indigenous people have been done with an underlying assumption based in colonial paternalistic posturing which assumes that leaders of social and political systems know what is best for Indigenous people” (Lindstrom & Bouvier, 2019, p. 33). Our current evaluation efforts highlight how AFCC leadership and Hub programming and service areas are purposely moving along this pathway in a “good way” by incorporating many of the recommendations offered in the first evaluation. We emphasize how leadership nurtures autonomy, how community members are involved, integrating cultural practices into all program areas, responses to crises, and incorporating trauma-informed programming to redress the colonial legacy.

Fostering Autonomy

Autonomy is a value that is commonly held amongst Indigenous groups throughout the Treaty 7 region. In last year’s evaluation report, it was identified as being an area that could offer overall benefits to the Hub if implemented deliberately. Our current consultations revealed how leadership approaches exemplify this value by fostering autonomy in staff. Problems within the Indigenous community are best defined by Indigenous members of the community. They are also best equipped to work towards finding the solutions. The Elders expressed tremendous confidence in Hub leadership and some of the qualities that align with that with an Indigenous leadership approach. These include ensuring staff are autonomous and have a sense of investment in their roles. Encouraging staff to be involved in fundraising for cultural programming such as the language program. One Elder commented that leadership has “total faith in the staff and what we’re doing is for the good of the community”. Additionally, our conversation with Steven, a community member who is now a current employee and whose story we expand on below, highlights the empowering effects of Indigenous autonomy. He was provided with the opportunity to seek out funding opportunities for an Indigenous language class and was successful in securing both the financial resources as well as partnering with a local church to ensure a space to hold the classes.

Community Members' Involvement

In this section, we draw attention to the contributions made by community who regularly access both the Hub and AFCC programs in order to demonstrate how Indigenous self-determination is being mobilized through relationships and programming initiatives. Originally from Williams Lake, BC, and having moved from Toronto, ON, Steven is no stranger to the urban environment. Shortly after moving to Calgary, he began accessing services through the AFCC which seemed natural to him since his Mother works at Native Friendship Centre in Toronto. With the opening of iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyo'p Indigenous Hub, the services were more accessible given that he is also a student at the Bow Valley College located next door to the Hub, Steven started to become a "regular" in the space. The staff shared how he showed a deep willingness to join the team and was able to connect with other community members through his volunteer work. One staff member stated, "We're happy that he's on our team because that's someone who knows our community on a different level than we do."

Steven expressed how he wanted to be connected to the indigenous community. Like many Indigenous people accessing the Hub, he grew up in harsh terrain. Taking an Aboriginal Addictions program in school enables him to gain a deeper insight into the colonial contexts of abuse but it will also allow him to work with people struggling with addictions because he has direct experience with that. Currently, Steven is an employee at the Hub and identifies the transition from volunteer to paid work as a pretty easy transition. Steven shared that being able to connect with clients is very important. Understanding where they are coming from and having patience necessary both in dealing with his own and others' journeys. Being free to smudge inside the Hub space and smudging with clients is a powerful way to connect with them and the fact that many have grown up the way he has provides added layers of trust and empathy so many share their challenges with him. Steven shared that he strives for humility and the clients can relate to him. He works on helping one person at a time to connect them with housing and food. His goal is to make people feel as though they are not alone and encourages them to not be afraid to ask for help by making them feel comfortable. Fostering a sense of belonging seems to come naturally for Steven. Notably, he recently received a grant from a local church for Cree language classes to be held in the church space. Steven stated, "I bring culture to churches and they're part of the reconciliation. To give back is really good." When asked what impact he feels he has had on the community, he shared that he hopes he is making a difference, "even if I reach

one person then I'm doing good and it's hard to get out of addiction." Having been to many treatment centers in the past three years, his words emanate from a place of experience and authenticity. He now helps people to connect to Sunrise Treatment Centre and is currently a committee member.

Another community member, Lucille, sees the Hub as a second home and began visiting the Hub when it opened in July of 2018. A local resident of the downtown core, the Hub is conveniently located and making access ideal. She began attending the Women's program every Friday then cultural events on Thursdays. A skilled beader, she was eventually asked to share her skill with the Women's center. Currently, she regularly attends a variety of programs and enjoys the community feasts and round dances where she also contributes her skills as a dancer. Notably, Lucille volunteers in helping to distribute drug kits. With pride and gratitude in her voice, Lucille emphasized how,

This place is a true blessing and every person who works here, I was able to have a positive encounter with – in every area there is someone you can talk to. I can say that this is a great group of people and if they don't have the answer, the staff will take the extra step to help out [with] employment, housing, education, food, clothing, whatever it may be. It's a place to come and hang out and be out of the home and volunteer here. If they were to shut this down, not only myself, but so many of our people would feel lost – where can we go now? Who can we talk to? Especially the homeless. There are so many of our people who are lost out there but to be here and keep our traditions alive, and welcome all people, that is what is so awesome.

Lucille shared words of wisdom and remarked how we all make choices in life that may lead us down difficult paths but the main source of strength is gratitude and the ability to be grateful to be alive. She also disclosed that "Living downtown is scary. I've seen a lot and it's made me keep to myself more." She feels secure in her little apartment, is grateful that the Hub is close by and doubts that she would be as active of a volunteer if it was located elsewhere. Truly, our conversation with Lucille highlighted how for many, the Hub is a "second home" and is "for all walks of life, the color of your skin doesn't matter and everyone is welcome."

Trauma-informed programming

As another future pathway that was worthwhile to further develop, it is important to acknowledge that The Hub is following up on that recommendation by delivering trauma-

informed programming through a cultural lens that appreciates the complex and multi-layered aspects of trauma from a holistic point of view. In this regard, trauma-informed programming attends to the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of healing and centrally redresses the colonial legacy through supporting community members in reconnecting to identity, ceremony, and teachings lost as a result of assimilative practices. For this reason, all programs prominently incorporate cultural activities that promote healing, and various programs support connection and healing in all areas of need through “helping the individual out as a community”.

Additionally, the Hub continues to build on ways of supporting community members in healing the various forms of trauma in their lives. Not only is programming trauma-informed, but there is a deeper understanding of how the intergenerational transmission of trauma gives rise to associated unhealthy behaviours. Hub staff in particular have shown great initiative and resourcefulness in seeking out flexible avenues that overcome barriers and allow community members to access mental health supports, which can further relieve their suffering. For example, programs such as Pathways to recovery are partnered with Indigenous mental health in order to “streamline” access to therapists who can provide traditional and culturally-appropriate support for underlying issues like sexual abuse, suicide, and grief. However, the gift and a notable difference in trauma-informed programming from an Indigenous perspective is that it moves beyond the idea that trauma is tied to an event, rather than the hundreds of years of cumulative transgressions and the resulting suffering experienced by Indigenous peoples. Here, not only does healing trauma require addressing the whole person and the Indigenous community as a whole, but as staff participate in cultural programming and working with the community, they experience healing as well.

Further, as partnerships continue to develop, the Hub is positioned to expand trauma-informed programming in line with cutting-edge behavioural medicine. One staff member spoke about entering into discussions regarding the development of an intergenerational trauma behavioural program for the Hub, which would be uniquely accessible to community members. Innovative ideas such as these, which remove barriers to important programming by bringing programming to the Hub, truly reflect trauma-informed practice because they facilitate access to programming in a safe and familiar environment. A fitting metaphor of the axiom guiding programming at the Hub is “Fitting the puzzle together” (Doreen), which utilizes the best in

trauma-informed practice from both worlds, honouring traditional and western approaches in a way that best promotes healing.

Elder Perspectives: Supporting Elder Capacity

Building Elder capacity was identified as a priority area in last year's evaluation. During this phase of the follow up evaluation, we were eager to follow up on this. Elders reflect how Indigenous values are lived – they 'walk the talk' and represent the collective and this was expressed during our consultations with Elders who regularly provide spiritual/ceremonial support to both the Hub and AFCC program areas. Elders are an embodiment of Indigenous values and are more concerned with addressing practical matters and issues of importance to the community rather than 'debating an idea to death.' Although Elders' guidance and perspectives are crucial in generating solutions to community defined problems, one of the biggest challenges that face the Indigenous community as a whole is how to include Elders in programming areas in ways that don't over-extend them. Despite the great deal of work Elders are investing in the community, our current consultation reveals that the Hub and AFCC is that supportive environment in which they can continue to build their capacity for the benefit of the greater urban Indigenous population. That Elders are starting to plan for a traditional decision-making process speaks to how the Hub is journeying along a pathway that responds to the needs of Elders so their capacity for generating solutions and maintaining traditional governance structures are upheld. Several of the Elders pointed out that good leaders/Elders are humble and don't make decisions based in ego. They also maintained that traditional decision-making and governance is just as valid and relevant today as it was before colonization.

Indigenous knowledge is relational involving the direct exchange of living energies. There is no replacement for that in today's modern world. The Elders described how they would use a storied approach to counselling. Having people look back on their life as a way to learn from their own story. One Elder expressed how this ancient method of learning needs to be rejuvenated. To pick up from the previous evaluation in which it was recommended that Indigenous Oral systems be paralleled with Western systems, it appears that this is indeed happening as Elders regularly use a story-telling or oral approach with community members. When asked if they think the Hub has been providing that space where Elders can build their capacity, they responded, "yes" and that process is happening now. They emphasized how they

felt leadership and staff were coming from a place of good intentions. They felt confident that they could begin identifying a network of community Elders who represented “hidden pots of knowledge” and bringing them in.

Staff Perspectives on Building Elder Capacity

When we consulted with staff around, it was revealed that part of certain roles is dedicated to supporting elders and ensuring that community members accessing services, as well as the broader community can access the healing and ceremonies that are led by Elders. Staff regularly transport the Elders so they don't have to get on the C-Train with their pipes and resources. Another organizes sweat lodges and ensures that people are available to help with the lodge. Supporting Elders is a role that many staff take very seriously. There are still challenges that need to be overcome, however. For example, in the Parenting program, it is challenging when working with Elders from other territories who are reluctant to share their teachings because they haven't been given permission from local Elders to do so. Elders are willing to help each other out and drawing on a diverse array of Elder knowledge ensures that there is a balance in Elder perspectives. Always asking what Elders need. Staff are gifted with learning from the Elders but also ensuring that Elders are coming from a kind place. It is a reality that there are Elders aren't there that aren't always coming from a good and kind place. It can be challenging working with Elders though because of their health. That's a concern. Elders will often refer to other Elders. Then comes the relationship building and connecting with Elders. Understanding what they need to make them feel comfortable and ensuring that there is no harm.

Staff also talked of connecting with other agencies to bring elders in – forming a network of Elders or contact list of community Elders that people can call upon. There are events where Elders are given the space for Storytelling and sharing cultural history and knowledge of plants. It is important to just make the space for sharing and teachings. Truly, the role of staff is to support Elders so they can support the urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement of community and stakeholders continues to happen at all levels, from leadership to staff and community members. Leadership continually reaches out and builds relationships with funders, many of whom visit the Hub and directly witness the impact their

investment has made on the front line. In this way donors, the city, and the province, share in the work that is being done. The resulting strong relational investment made on both sides has been a key factor in funding increases, despite the many cuts and layoffs experienced by other agencies and friendship centers. This is partly due to AFCC's focus on mental health, addictions, and opioid response, which are areas the Alberta government has indicated will receive continued funding. Securing continued funding is also due to the AFCC's skilled attainment of new contracts, which are in line with the "hub and spoke model." Lee, Renaud, and Hills (2003) describe the hub and spoke model, suggesting it not only reflects changing mental health and addictions paradigms but also fiscal considerations. The authors suggest that it is typically comprised of a "central agency, or hub, with spokes radiating to and from various mental, medical, and social services" (Lee et al., 2003, p.1590). The model strives for efficacy and efficiency in terms of the potential for clients to receive bidirectional referrals between the central agency and outside resources, which may otherwise be challenging to navigate and therefore access (Lee et al., 2003).

As a Hub, the AFCC has been approached by government and other agencies wanting to partner, and believes that by focusing on the programs it has and partnering with other agencies currently running effective programming, the Indigenous community is best served. A fitting metaphor is the idea of a home fire where people come together and think of how they can best support one another.

Further, as leadership, staff, and community members participate in stakeholder engagement, the variety of engaged stakeholders also continues to grow. In addition to the main funders, the staff have shown tremendous initiative through engaging smaller stakeholders within the community, who participate in ongoing partnerships. For example, local Starbucks and Circle K stores frequently gift merchandise as a way of giving back to the community and validate the good work that the AFCC is doing. Staff have also reached out to the Community Kitchen, who have donated the space needed to prepare the Eagle Spirit feast. Similarly, staff have forged partnerships with the University of Calgary, which provide avenues to build capacity in the Indigenous community through language classes and innovative ways of addressing intergenerational trauma.

Enduring gifts

In this section, we highlight some of the contributions of the Hub that emerged from our consultations with staff and leadership. We position these themes as enduring gifts offered by the Hub. These gifts include reciprocity, cultural connections and program growth, and sustained community and stakeholder engagement.

Reciprocity

In last year's evaluation report, reciprocity was identified as a main theme. When we asked what reciprocity looked like for the community members accessing the Hub, leadership and staff were eager to describe some of the ways the members gave back to the Hub. Many agreed that volunteering was one of the main conduits for community members to demonstrate reciprocity. The Hub staff have no shortage of help with initiatives that revolve around food which not only reveals the willingness of the community to offer support in ensuring everyone is fed but also reveals the level of community need in terms of access to adequate food. Once a month the Hub provides a big meal for the community and many people come in off the street and to help with that. One Friday a month, community members help with bagged lunch preparation. It is also common for Indigenous artists and other members of the broader community to volunteer their time, especially with regard to the Women's program. Those community members who have unique talents give back to the Hub by volunteering to teach others their skills. With the Eagle Spirit program, people show up early to set up the chairs and help clean up afterwards and there are a handful of 'regulars' who are consistently helping with events. Community members who have a fixed presence at the Hub are eager to give back.

The Hub also partners with local businesses to foster reciprocity. For example, staff distribute cards that can be exchanged at a local convenience store for items that include a free Slurpee or a free coffee when community members do good things. When they go into the store to redeem them, the store clerk asks them what they did to help and the community members share their kind acts which spreads good feelings in the local community.

Another way community members give back is by keeping the morale up. One staff member revealed how people infuse humor and good feelings into the Hub space by "Telling jokes when we look stressed." It makes staff feel good when community members help without being asked. The spirit of reciprocity permeates the relationships between community members. Program

coordinators describe reciprocity as a natural exchange. Notable to this is an implicit understanding within Indigenous community that when you receive something the expectation is that you will give something back but the environment needs to nurture reciprocal exchange. Community members need to feel safe that what they have to offer will be accepted. The safe space is spread through word of mouth. People from the street come and say, “we hear you are doing good things here.” Many will simply come to the Hub to drum and sing. Even by singing and drumming they felt it is a way of giving back because they were sharing that energy, that medicine. The notion of self-determination is embedded in reciprocity since community members are free to give back to the Hub in ways that are individually defined whether that’s through helping out at events, teaching others or simply sharing a joke and good feelings.

Cultural connections

The iitaohkanitsini’kotsiiyio’p Indigenous Hub continues to be, as one staff member described, “a beacon of hope” to the urban Indigenous community. Our consultations revealed that the staff host monthly community feasts which brings people together. A consistent theme was spirituality and ceremony by providing daily access to smudging and ensuring that sustained Elder engagement is always prioritized. These activities and others such as drumming and round dances remain crucial in increasing cultural ‘assets’ and capacity in the urban Indigenous community. One staff member shared that “Because we’re the Friendship Centre, we’re really the centre of [cultural] connection. People are starting to see that and if people want to smudge, they can come here.”

Overall growth

In line with expectations expressed in the prior report, the Hub continues to experience overall growth and marked program expansion, in response to the needs of the Indigenous community and the opportunity to connect to culture in a safe space. Certainly, a large part of this expansion is due to accessible programming that reflects traditional cultural knowledge and ceremony, as well as “the support that they (the community members) know is here” (Melissa). Programs under the umbrella of health, housing, and outreach/cultural reconnection are reportedly continuing to grow. Further, while programs such as parenting took place in the

former AFCC space, now at the Hub they continue in a new space. Despite this change, however, such programs have not changed in group size or dynamic but have seen a change in clientele.

Additionally, with the opportunity of new funding streams and partnerships, programming at the Hub has also expanded to involve a number of important projects. For example, two new projects are respectively aimed at suicide prevention and improving urban Indigenous peoples' cancer outcomes thorough providing culturally appropriate cancer prevention, healthy living programming, and education resources. Such projects often complement programming currently being offered, as well as offer future avenues for program growth.

Our consultation with Staff Sergeant Cattoni offered additional insights into areas of growth. He informed that every time the agencies bring in a new service provider, it has the multiplier effect and it ripples throughout the organization and the impact to the service delivery model is massive. Cattoni described is as “a rippling, circular effect rather than a linear effect”. He provided an example with the financial empowerment program brought in by the United Way. Instead of training SORCe staff, which would have overburdened their already substantial case loads, they hired someone to do the financial empowerment. It was a huge success and the person was able to bring in 1.2 million dollars to clients using the financial empowerment model. He shared how a young indigenous woman who hadn't done her taxes in 10 years accessed the services of the financial empowerment worker who was able to get over 30,000 dollars for the woman. This gave the woman a new start on life and showed her how to open a bank account and how to budget. Bringing in a resource like that holds positive benefits and had an impact on all stakeholders' clients.

Collective Action: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

At the time of this writing, we find ourselves in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic. Given the already vulnerable and at-risk population accessing the Hub and AFCC programs, the current health situation presents even more hurdles that need to be cleared. The data on usage bears witness to both the impact of the iitaohkanitsini'kotsiiyio'p Indigenous Hub/AFCC and the ongoing needs of the Indigenous community. In the face of our current health crisis, AFCC has put together a COVID-19 Task Force that comprises staff, stakeholders, and community members. The mandate of the task force is to “ensure individuals in our

community have access to basic necessities, mental health support, cultural support, and access to vital services during the crisis”. This task force is truly reflective of the relationally-oriented values of AFCC as an Indigenous-led organization. Community members are able to give back to the Hub by volunteering their time to assist in delivering food hampers. Staff members help community members access mental health supports and assist in filling out COVID-19, 10 relief payment forms. Elders are doing their best to ensure that community members are spiritually grounded during this time of crisis. As mentioned by the Elders, nothing takes the place of face-to-face interactions but in these exceptional times, they are making the extra effort to use technology to connect with community members who are already feeling isolated. The AFCC and Hub teams are currently responding to the immediate needs of the Indigenous community and mobilizing community partnerships in order to do this efficiently.

In terms of stakeholder perspectives, the work around COVID-19 means agencies at the Crossroads center can start to build on those collective impact foundational pieces. This is important because developing a collective impact framework will prompt conversations around governance, strategic direction, and integration. Staff Sergeant Cattoni felt there was a need to move towards systems integration approaches within the next 12-18 months. The challenges around COVID-19 further enabled the agencies at Crossroads thinking more as a collective. Although he didn’t provide a clear direction on where systems integration will lead, he felt that the opportunities are profound.

Looking to the future: Priority areas for development

We envision the current document as a point of ongoing planning and dialogue. Given that the iitaohkanitsini’kotsiiyio’p Indigenous Hub is still going through significant phases of growth and transitions, it makes sense to see this evaluation as a living document within which programming and administrative planning can revolve around. As such, this final section highlights areas that could benefit from sustained planning and attention. Based on our analysis of the consultation data, we also offer modest recommendations that might help to mitigate some of the enduring challenges related to navigating the challenges of the physical space and drawing attention to funding shortages that hinder AFCC from responding to the unique and ever-changing needs of the community. We stress, however, that these recommendations are beyond the control of the AFCC and Hub leadership. We further recognize and acknowledge the

significant skills and expertise of leadership and staff in holding space for cultural connection and healing despite funding challenges that typify not-for-profit organizations.

Increase in Space for Programs

In order to foster a space that offers safety, confidentiality, and adequate room for programming, the AFCC may look towards expanding into a larger space in the future, which also has an associated increase in storage space, kitchen space, and private or classroom space with ample room to house the growing numbers of program participants and community members. As connection to culture and ceremony remain a centrally important aspect of the AFCC, it would also be beneficial if future space was able to provide an area dedicated to ceremony, acting as a “hands-on cultural space big enough to accommodate everyone” (staff), as well including room for multiple programs to run without overlap or disruptions. An added advantage of a larger space would be to have additional room to celebrate community members in unique ways: For example, adding a display or showcase for local Indigenous artists could provide them with a source of revenue not otherwise available.

For now, it appears that programs immediately requiring a greater amount of space increase their off-site programming as they find appropriate community spaces available (for example, community kitchens, spaces for powwows). Certainly, running concurrent programming in a new space has its associated challenges, some of which may temporarily be ameliorated by running fewer programs on an increased number of evenings, if staff availability and funding allows. While this suggestion does not perhaps confer any advantage in terms of privacy requirements during daytime office hours, it may allow additional time to run programming with extra time between programs in case programming goes long or there are additional mental health/group debriefing needs that require attention.

Funding

The data on community usage reveals a pattern that funders should pay attention to, particularly regarding several key areas. First, the marked increase in accessing addiction and mental health support through the Hub highlights the continuing need for positive relationships which integrate cultural and traditional indigenous values as community members heal. Undoubtedly this is complex work and future funding may not only aim to increase the number

of supports (staff/programs) but consider increasing the specialization of mental health/addiction supports available through the Hub. In combination with the evident increase in basic needs' support, especially housing, food, and necessities, it is also apparent that there is a continuing need for funding that supports wrap-around services that build on a diversity of ways for the Hub to positively impact the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual foundations of community health. Implicitly, this work would continue to redress the ongoing impact of colonialism, racism, and intergenerational trauma experienced by community members, and would be developed in collaboration with community members in order to build sustainable programs that increase capacity at the individual and community levels.

Elders' Considerations

In an effort to honor the voices of Elders, we highlight some of the feedback that Elders offered during our consultation. Some of the feedback might be viewed as a 'wish list' of sorts but is nonetheless important to consider as it speaks to the needs of a growing urban Indigenous population. One Elder shared that he wished there was a plot of land on which Elders can feel comfortable to share knowledge, and ceremony together. Notably, one of the Elders expressed dissatisfaction with the poor nutritional quality of food that food banks distribute to Indigenous peoples who are living on the street. With little to no access to healthy food sources, it was suggested that a community garden initiative be implemented which would not only ensure better access to natural foods but may reinvigorate the relationship to traditional food sources. Another Elder expressed how having a role dedicated explicitly to helping Elders would mitigate the energy drain that some Elders may feel when providing support to high needs individuals. They all agreed that having someone who is knowledgeable enough to assist in ceremonies such as "Gathering rocks, helping with the fire, going out early to make sure the fire's going with those rocks". An Elders helper role would also take some of the pressure off of Elders, many of whom already have so much on their plates in terms of providing spiritual support to the Hub community which more often than not, consists of individuals who are incredibly high-needs. As with many people who make up the support network, Elders are at risk of experiencing burn-out so an Elder's helper might assist in minimizing this risk. Incorporating an Elder's advisory committee to ensure that decision making encompasses a process that reflects the diversity of Elder perspectives.

Conclusion: Gathering Community Voices

Although the iitaohkanitsini’kotsiiyio’p Indigenous Hub is still a relatively new fixture in the downtown core, its presence has already had a positive and enduring impact in the Indigenous community, as clearly demonstrated through this phase of the evaluation. One of the goals of this current report was to gather the perspectives of community members in order to determine what the Hub and AFCC programs are doing well and how program areas can better respond to the needs of the urban Indigenous community. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we were unable to fully provide that space for community members. Although this document offers valuable insights into the continued positive impacts and ways that the Hub and AFCC have responded to the recommendations issued in last year’s evaluation report, we realize that we have unfinished work. The story of the Hub contains many more themes that are waiting to be told and it is our intention to follow up with community members once our world begins to recover from this extraordinary health crisis.

Gratitude

The AFCC Senate, Board, management and staff wish to wholeheartedly thank the many funders, supporters and stakeholders who have made this valuable space possible. Special thank you to the United Way of Calgary and Area, Calgary Foundation, and Calgary Police Services for believing in our Vision and walking this journey with us and the community hand in hand. Finally, and most importantly the AFCC family wishes to thank the Elders who have guided our work with wisdom, traditional knowledge and teachings - the root of all our programs and services.

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Appendix A

